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Minor Dissertation

Organizational and Social Challenges in the Implementation of
Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Curricula

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This minor dissertation has been written in order to fulfill the requirements for the
Masters in Education at the University of Cape Town.

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The institutionalization of interdisciplinary programmes is one way in which attempts are made to deepen the socially responsive nature of South African higher education. In this minor dissertation, two postgraduate interdisciplinary programmes that appear to be socially responsive in nature are examined to better understand the challenges of implementation that such programmes face. The aim is to gain insight into the ways in which these challenges may stem from the inherent difficulty of cross-disciplinary work, and to understand ways in which the institutional context works to support or inhibit such initiatives. The formal method of research is the case study; two case studies are made for comparative purposes. The data collected for this study suggests that both cases experienced some difficulty as a result of the social and epistemological differences which often arise when individuals from varying disciplines are brought together. However, a good portion of the challenges which both programmes faced seemed to be institutional in nature. Recognition of interdisciplinary work by the traditionally discipline-aligned university, lack of funding and support for interdisciplinarity, increasing managerialism, the administrative capacity of the institution, and the organizational structure of the university surfaced in the data as the most significant contextual obstacles which both cases experienced. Illuminating differences, however, did arise in that the data indicated that the institutional climate and a lack of social organization were considered to be significant obstacles for only one of the cases. It is suggested that this may be due to the differing institutional contexts in which the two case studies occurred (which took place in 1997 and 2001 respectively) and of the differing ways in which these two programmes are funded.

1. Introduction

Since its transition from *apartheid* in 1994, South Africa has been experiencing a period of transformation in nearly all spheres of activity: economic, social, environmental, commercial, political and educational to name but a few. The system of higher education, in particular, has been transformed most noticeably by the radical change in the size and racial composition of most universities. This was brought about not only by government policy, but also by pressure from society to reform, and the unexpected and not well understood departure of white students from the higher education system (see Cloete, 2002). Also of great impact, however, are the policies that have been introduced by the Department of Education which have called for changes in the traditional alignment of the university, from an institution organized according to disciplines and serving intellectual purposes, to a more interdisciplinary institution with goals which include the economic and social development of the country. The national higher education transformation agenda calls for, *inter alia*, the creation of programmes that are interdisciplinary in nature and oriented toward projects aimed to benefit, either socially or economically, the community at large. These policies were published with the aim of achieving “greater portability, interdisciplinarity and coherence”, and with hopes of promoting increased access and success in higher education (Cloete, 2002: p. 418). To understand how these interdisciplinary programmes are established, and how they survive in traditionally ordered higher education institutions will be of interest to those who seek to advance this agenda.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to locate the current study in the discussion surrounding interdisciplinary activities. The literature to be reviewed has been divided into four sections. The first section includes a brief selection of responses to the question “What is interdisciplinarity?”. The subsequent sections look at the challenges that interdisciplinary programmes face as these are reflected in the literature; these challenges will be examined according to both the inherent difficulties of cross-boundary work and the contextual difficulties. The fourth section examines the South African response to interdisciplinarity as reflected in the literature. The final section is a review of resource dependency and neo-institutional theories of change, which will form the conceptual framework for examining these interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes as instances of adaptive response to a range of change drivers.

2.1 What is interdisciplinarity?

A review of the literature on interdisciplinarity suggests that the definition of the phenomenon is somewhat elusive, and is the subject of contestation. As a result, there are many differing definitions of what interdisciplinarity is. It is, therefore, not a simple task to present a clear-cut definition.

Mudroch (1992) discusses how the difficulty of defining interdisciplinarity is compounded by the fact that the concept of academic discipline has not been clearly defined, and how as traditional disciplines have historically developed they have incorporated aspects of other disciplines, which complicates the separation of the disciplinary from the interdisciplinary. Nevertheless, he poses four conditions that must be fulfilled in order for work to be considered interdisciplinary: 1) specialists from two or more different fields must be engaged in the work; 2) these specialists come from distant fields with differing terminologies; 3) the work is not covered fully by a particular discipline or within its canon or paradigms and as a result the aims of the work and the methodology employed will be new; and 4) the individual disciplines are enriched by the other disciplines. Mudroch, agreeing with the work of Mittelstrass (1987), sees interdisciplinarity as originating from the disciplines and, rather than working against the disciplines, instead serves as “a tool for correcting the unintended tendency of the disciplines to drift toward specialization” (Mudroch, 1992: p. 45).

Nissani (1995) provides a less historically-focused definition of interdisciplinarity, as well as a model by which to measure scale of interdisciplinarity. He discusses how the term interdisciplinarity has been divided and sub-divided into components like “multidisciplinarity, pluridisciplinarity, crossdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and even metadisciplinarity” (p. 120), but sees little use in such subdivisions and sees them as an “attempt to confer upon this term a precision it does not possess” (p. 121). Instead, he approaches interdisciplinarity by beginning with a clear definition of *discipline* as

any comparatively self-contained and isolated domain of human experience which possesses its own community of experts. Every discipline has its peculiar constellation of *distinctive components*: such things as shared goals, concepts, facts, tacit skills (Polanyi 1962), methodologies, personal experiences, values, and aesthetic judgments (Nissani, 1995: p. 120).

From this definition of the discipline, Nissani proposes a minimalist definition of interdisciplinarity as “bringing together in some fashion distinctive components of two or more disciplines” (ibid). He then divides disciplinarity into four realms, knowledge, research, education, and theory, and devises a paradigm from which to measure the “richness” of interdisciplinary knowledge, education or research. He suggests this be done by examining four variables: how many disciplines are involved and how distant these are from each other, how creatively they are combined, and how integrated they are with each other (p. 125). An understanding of what interdisciplinarity is and its various applications is vital for understanding of the current case studies.

This particular study is focused on interdisciplinary education; that is, bringing together knowledge from two or more disciplines to create a curriculum and transmit a new amalgamation of knowledge to learners. The following sections explore the distinctive challenges facing this dimension of interdisciplinary work.

2.2 The inherent challenges of interdisciplinary curriculum

“Attempts to change or modify educational codes will meet with resistance at a number of different levels, irrespective of the intrinsic educational merit of a particular code” (Bernstein, 1975: p. 110).

Bernstein (1975) provides a framework for understanding curricular types, and discusses the social implications of changing from one curricular type to another. He establishes a conceptual framework of “classification”, or how well boundaries are maintained between the different disciplinary components of a curriculum, and “frame” which is the degree of relative control that the teacher or student have over the content, order and pacing of the curriculum. Where there is strong classification, or boundary maintenance, Bernstein terms it a collection code. When there is “a marked attempt to reduce the strength of classification”, it is called an integrated code (p. 90). Integrated codes call for “a change in what counts as having knowledge, in what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, in what counts as a valid realization of knowledge, and a change in the organizational context” (p. 104). According to Bernstein, there are inherent challenges which arise in the case of a shift from one type of curriculum to the other.

The restructuring of curricular codes has implications, according to Bernstein, for not only how knowledge is structured, and indeed what would be counted as knowledge, but such a restructuring also has implications for the ways in which individuals within an organization relate to one another; that is, it has repercussions in the social dimension of work. “The concept of relatively weak boundary maintenance which is the core principle of integrated codes is realized both in the structuring of educational knowledge *and* in the structuring of social relationships” (p. 103).

Establishing an integrated code calls for a shift in power relationships and changes the structure and distribution of power. Bernstein explains how collection codes often imply hierarchical structures, or, in the higher education context, high levels of individual autonomy; any shift to an integrated code would call for a shift in authority, and the establishment of more horizontal relationships as opposed to

hierarchical or autonomous relationships. The collaborative effort that is part and parcel of integrated codes calls for more cooperative decision making, requiring a shift from autonomous or hierarchical practices. Thus, such a shift has implications for authority, and the distribution of power, in the organizational units associated with interdisciplinary curricula.

Bernstein also discusses the notion of identity, and how the shift to an integrated code will meet with challenges because of the identity issues that are involved. "Where classification is strong, the boundaries between the different contents are sharply drawn. ... Strong classification also creates a strong sense of membership in a particular class and so a specific identity" (p. 90). He elaborates on how individuals are socialized into and develop a subject loyalty, which increases as their educational life goes on; any change to this loyalty, or identity, requires "a re-socialization into a *new* subject loyalty" (p. 96). He identifies this subject loyalty as "the linch-pin of the identity" (ibid).

Any attempt to weaken or *change* classification strength (or even frame strength) may be felt as a threat to one's identity and may be experienced as a pollution endangering the sacred. Here we have one source of the resistance to change of educational code (p. 96).

Henkel (2000) examines the notion of identity, and in particular how it is affected by changes in the higher education institutional environment, particularly those which lead to the fragmentation of the disciplines. She prefaces her discussion by explaining how identity has been more related to profession / occupation in the 19th and 20th centuries, and how it is central to individual academics and the academic profession. Academia provides a context for people to develop strong individual identities which are embedded in a well defined community. The discipline is seen as the basic unit of identity, providing "a physical structure and a set of accredited, collective functions, through which academics consolidate and refine their disciplinary identities" (p. 19).

Henkel discusses how the shift from identifying with an institution towards identifying more with one's own sub-discipline and area of specialization (which often happens as a result of bureaucratic structures being implemented as a response to policy) has repercussions for the enterprise.

As disciplines subdivide, multiply and become more specialized, they become a more disintegrative force as far as the enterprise is concerned. It is more difficult for their members to make connections with each other, let alone across disciplinary boundaries, and their growing numbers increase the pressures on the institution to set priorities (p. 20).

However, Polanyi (1962) (in Henkel 2000) argues that disciplinary fragmentation is exaggerated, that academics are bound together by "overlapping communities or common norms" as well as by the institutional context (p. 21).

In her 2002 article, Henkel examines the claim that transformations in the late 20th century have "undermined the structures and relationships within which academic identities have been sustained" (p. 137). Although she concludes from two empirical research studies that "academic identity remained surprisingly stable in the period

under study, although the longer-term outlook remains uncertain” (ibid), she does identify a number of interesting issues that pertain to the current study in particular.

There was a movement towards identifying more with one’s discipline (rather than the institution) as the result of several factors. The research pointed out that a balance in relationships may be changing now that disciplines may have the ability to generate resources and improve the institutional reputation. Also, the methods which management chooses to employ (for example top-down approaches) can cause academics to identify less with the institution and more with their discipline.¹

Most interesting, however, was that the call for interdisciplinarity had created some change in terms of the traditional disciplinary organizational framework of the university, with possible repercussions for academic identity.

Inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary activity is increasing substantially, with possible long-term implications for academic identities. However, immediate implications are less obvious. One of the most persistent themes in the study is that academic working lives continue to be centered in their discipline (p. 140).

2.3 The organizational and contextual challenges of interdisciplinary work

Mudroch (1992), in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the status of interdisciplinary work at Swiss universities, interviewed university members from all levels of the academic hierarchy who were involved in interdisciplinary work. Among the types of questions he asked were those of the problems surrounding interdisciplinary work. From the interviews he identified several types of problems that this kind of work may encounter, both social and contextual.

Mudroch identifies several aspects of the human dimension of interdisciplinary work which are of great importance, and which could cause difficulties. These human aspects include the ability to initiate and establish personal acquaintances that in turn catalyze interdisciplinary initiatives, and personal characteristics which aren’t necessarily linked to the disciplines, like flexibility, open-mindedness, humility, creativity, initiative, and patience. Also highlighted was the unique importance of personal dynamics (in small and large groups) and the role that non-hierarchical leadership plays in interdisciplinary work.

Mudroch also discusses how progress in interdisciplinary work can be held back by the communication difficulties that typically arise as a result of the congregation of specialists from different fields with established terminologies. Members often must become familiar with some of this new language. The retreat to less specialized language does at times occur, often resulting in a loss of precision and a great deal of effort on the part of academics. Eventually new terminologies can be arrived at that are specific to the interdisciplinary field; this new terminology, however, may subsequently make it difficult for newcomers to enter and contribute to the new field.

¹ For a discussion on the massified university’s movement towards managerialist values, and what Hoggett (1991) terms post-bureaucratic management methods, see Becher and Trowler (2001).

Also identified by Mudroch was the detrimental effect that dominating disciplines can have on their ability to engage in interdisciplinary projects. One such discipline was medicine, which was identified by the informants as being “rigid and arrogant (even by its own representatives)” and thus more difficult to work with on co-operative projects (p. 52).

Of particular significance was that the Swiss context seemed to point towards the predominantly negative impact that becoming involved in interdisciplinary work can have on an individual’s career path.

...the losses seem to outweigh the gains. On the one hand, the marginal status of many interdisciplinary activities is disadvantageous for the career. On the other hand, a specialist who devotes all his attention to one discipline is more likely to advance in that discipline than someone wishing to acquire competence in two areas. (p. 52)

It was, however, noted, that such involvement can have a positive impact for those who are already well established in their careers, as well as that engagement in a “quickly upcoming interdisciplinary area...may even lead to spectacular career advancement” (ibid).

Interdisciplinary activities also face the “danger of dilettantism” (p. 52), that is that such academic initiatives will be regarded as not being in-depth or rigorous. Mudroch explains how the use of simplified language in place of less accessible disciplinary terminologies at times yield results which “bear greater resemblance to common sense or journalism than to scientific endeavor” (ibid). This is exacerbated by the fact that evaluation of interdisciplinary work is often difficult as there are no experts in interdisciplinary fields from whom to gain approval.

The individual institutional context seemed to have less of an impact on interdisciplinary activity in Switzerland. Overloaded schedules leaving little time for interdisciplinary engagement was one complaint, as well as a “lack of structures for supporting interdisciplinary activities” the result of which is that “interdisciplinary in Switzerland survives due more to the initiative of individual persons or groups than to any established institutions” (p. 53).

In an attempt to gain insight into the ways that the university context “enables or frustrates” (p. 1) interdisciplinary programmes at University College London, Rowland (2002) initiated a series of discussions with teaching and research academic staff who were involved in interdisciplinary work at that same institution. Various problems arising from the broad professional context, as well as from his particular institutional context were identified.

One of the challenges which surfaced was that interdisciplinary research proposals tended to be given little value or attention by funders. This was understood to be partly due to the fact that the members of funding panels do not often have interdisciplinary backgrounds themselves, and that interdisciplinarity and its varying definitions are often not understood.

In addition, despite the fact that in the United Kingdom university managers and external funders rhetorically promote interdisciplinary work, academic journals, which are usually focused on narrow disciplinary fields, often deny such research access to publishing. This may be the result of the disciplinary backgrounds of the panels which select submissions, as well as the journals' underlying mission to represent the concerns central to the discipline. There was also some agreement that academic journals are a gate-keeping mechanism from which disciplines look to protect their boundaries from encroachment from the fringes.

In terms of Rowland's institutional context, interdisciplinary work seemed to face bureaucratic difficulties regardless of whether it occurred across departmental boundaries or within departments. The impression Rowland was given was that within departments there was very little space within which academics could share ideas and be driven towards engaging in critically interdisciplinary work. The existence of bureaucratic structures seemed to lessen the ability of colleagues to communicate, whether they were in the same or differing departments. As a result, interdisciplinary work seemed to create management problems, rather than intellectual problems, which resulted in management figures intervening to provide solutions, for example setting up interdisciplinary units. This resulted in more instrumental approaches to interdisciplinarity being taken, focusing on the end product of the endeavor rather than the intellectual process through which it would be reached.

Also of concern to the participating academics was that the current "regime of accountability" (ibid) discouraged individuals from participating in interdisciplinary endeavors due to the relatively higher risk of failure.

Thus far, the key issues emerging from this literature review have pointed to an environment where interdisciplinary work faces numerous challenges. Work that requires staff to cross the boundaries of their traditional discipline and enter a new arena of knowledge production has both epistemological and social implications. The weakening of boundaries, or in Bernsteinian terms, the change to an integrated code, requires academics to participate in a community where academic autonomy is replaced by more horizontal relationships and shared decision-making. Participants are asked to relinquish their academic autonomy, which may be seen a threat to well-developed disciplinary identity. A clear challenge for such projects is the ability of participants to maintain non-hierarchical relationships.

Compounding this basic challenge to interdisciplinary endeavors are the more contextual obstacles identified in the literature. The detriment that such work can have to one's career path, the lack of professional acknowledgement, the lack of support structures at the institutional level, and the current regime of accountability which operates in higher education are all issues that are of particular importance to the current study.

2.4 The Response to Interdisciplinarity in South African Higher Education

Both the White Paper (1997) and the Higher Education Act (1997) exhort universities to 'programmatised' their curricula, a measure seen by policy planners as necessary to break the grip of disciplinary majors on curricula and

to promote greater interdisciplinarity and thereby greater 'relevance' (Muller, 2003: p. 108).

The scope of the changes that the South African higher education system has experienced is considerable. Facets of the transformation include the restructuring of the faculties of many universities, and the mergers of all but a few select higher education institutions. The call by policymakers to restructure the undergraduate curriculum of higher education institutions was but one of the complex changes comprising the huge transformation that higher education has gone through. The postgraduate programmes which are the focus of the current study were implemented in the aftermath of this huge curricular upheaval in South African undergraduate education. It is with this backdrop of fairly radical change, and often turmoil, that the current cases reported in this study unfold.

Ensor (2002) describes the South African national environment, which has responded in varying ways to this call for interdisciplinarity, as one where there "is little evidence of interdisciplinarity as might be envisaged by what Bernstein (1975) refers to as an integrated curriculum" (p. 288). She describes how

"the central organizing principle of university undergraduate curricula remains the disciplines. In *this* sense, contemporary curricula in sciences and humanities look little different from the way they did before academic programme implementation began" (p. 289).

In his discussion of the "complex generic pressure on higher education institutions to be more 'responsive' or more 'relevant'", Muller (2003) explains how these pressures are "salvation from the dead hand of apartheid on the one hand, and progress towards global economic competitiveness on the other" (p. 101). Most research regarding change in higher education in South Africa, according to Muller, generally tracks the implementation of the policies driving the change, rather than focusing on how or why universities respond to the pressures for responsiveness and relevance.

Muller argues that in the South African undergraduate arena "universities make largely rhetorical accommodations to interdisciplinary curricula, especially where the discipline and the disciplinary tradition is strong, except where universities are in search of students or a market niche" (p. 103). He argues that universities, at the undergraduate level, are resistant to exogenous pressures, and that the way they respond is more based on their internal conditions and circumstances (which are somewhat historically determined) than on any evident virtues the policy may have.

Muller draws upon research regarding curriculum change in undergraduate science programmes (including Ensor's 2002 work) to show how the response to the call for interdisciplinarity has ranged "from enthusiastic to reluctant" and has been resisted by many institutions (p. 108). He discusses how the *form* of the change has been implemented, but not necessarily its *substance*. He suggests that it is unclear how and why institutions do respond, and whether it is for policy reasons, or simply to cater to the educational market, or for other reasons.

He concludes that much of the literature oversimplifies university response, and that policy impact and market impact have been too dominant in the discussion of

adaptation. Rather than concentrating on whether a policy has been implemented as intended by policymakers, or focusing on what exogenous factors have driven the implementation, Muller suggests that we do not spend sufficient time documenting how equipped institutions are to deal with change. Van Vught (1991) and Scharpf (1987) (in Muller), conclude that educational reforms often fail because “their complexity cannot be absorbed by the institutions” (p. 118). In that same vein, Muller suggests that programme restructuring in South Africa very possibly failed because policymakers underestimated the differing capacities that institutions have to respond, or to absorb such complex change. He warns that “we do not take the institutions and *institutional responsive capacity* sufficiently seriously” (p. 119).

Working in an undergraduate context where substantive responses to these policies are understood to be more of the exception than the norm, Moore, in his 2003 case study, compares the implementation of interdisciplinary programmes in the natural sciences at two different universities. He takes a special interest in understanding the motivations and the dispositions of the academics who have chosen to comply with rather than resist exogenous pressures for change, pressures that often require academics to collaborate across boundaries, often with a loss of academic autonomy. Moore explains how

...the policy of programmatisation, especially its discourse of integration, represents a significant adaptive challenge for institutions, requiring as it does, a modification of the relationships between traditionally insulated disciplinary discourses, and concomitantly changed social relations between academics. (p. 7)

His findings indicated that for one case, the implementation of the programme was facilitated by the development of a new social order based around an “overarching disciplinary identity”, which was further aided by the material rewards that were in store for participants, and the identification of the disciplinary area as a focus of strategic priority for the institution. For the other case however, implementation was hampered by a “competitive struggle for influence over – and participation in – this curricular domain” (p. 39). This struggle was compounded by an uneasy relationship between the staff involved in the programme and the institution’s management.

Moore suggests that leadership and management capacity also affect the stability of curriculum adaptations, and concludes that

...although cognitive motivations remain the most credible basis for adaptive activity of this kind, the social variable, particularly the varying dispositions which animate academics, and their perceptions concerning their material security, are important mediators of how academics respond to these opportunities (ibid).

The present study is set within this same South African context - a context of complex higher education transformations where it is generally accepted that policy’s call for interdisciplinarity has been catered to in only a limited manner at the undergraduate level. Institutional capacity for response and the social variables conditioning these changes are significant issues that have been under-represented in the South African literature, particularly in regard to postgraduate education. Ensor, Muller and Moore

(as well as other authors such as Gibbon et. al 2001) have all conducted and published research dealing explicitly with undergraduate endeavors. It may be argued that the characteristics of postgraduate education which distinguish it from undergraduate education include the view that the forms of knowledge provided at undergraduate levels tend to be more stable and 'canonical', and thus less easily adaptable into interdisciplinary curriculum settings. The forms of knowledge assembled for postgraduate curriculum may be more provisional and less stable, and thus may be more easily accommodated in a hybridized curriculum setting. Also, in the case of postgraduate-level work, the conditions may exist for less defensive dispositions among academics. It is hoped that the present study will contribute to a debate about whether the same trends (or others) as experienced by undergraduate endeavors could apply to the postgraduate context, where the curriculum may be more closely related to the production of knowledge.

2.5 Review of theory

The theoretical perspective chosen to frame this study consists of theories of institutional adaptation, particularly two differing but not mutually exclusive theories of adaptive response – resource dependency theory and neo-institutional theory. These frameworks will be applied to the cases in order to develop an account of how these initiatives have come about, and how they have subsequently fared.

When viewing change through the resource dependency theory, the choices and changes that occur within an organization are seen not as arbitrary decisions, but as an organization's pro-active and reactive response to the external forces that hold the resources necessary for the organization (in the present study, the programme) to function. This theory implies that change is the result of an unequal balance of power between the organization and its environment, and thus the organization seeks to optimize its position through a strategic pattern of interactions with the environment. The model emphasizes that

organizations act strategically and make active choices to manage their dependency on those parts of their task environment that control vital resources. Organizations thus have a major capacity for change, but their response to demand from the environment is not automatic and passive, but active and volitional (Maassen and Gornitzka, 1999: p. 297).

The resource dependency theory, although focusing on the relationship between the organization and its environment, also takes into consideration the interdependencies between organizations arising from the competition for resources. The theory also examines the way in which relationships within the organization affect its reaction to the environment, for example when weaker sub-units seek to interact with environment to improve their status.

The resource dependency theory stresses that in order to understand adaptation, one needs to examine external dependencies and the internal power relationships within an organization, accompanied by the study of

the way organizations perceive their environments, how they act to control and avoid dependencies, the role of organizational leadership in these processes, as

well as the way internal power distributions affect and are affected by external dependencies (Maassen and Gornitzka, 1999: p. 298).

The neo-institutionalist perspective on change, however, sees change in institutions or organizations being conditioned also by the value systems circulating within the organization, and the relationship between these internal value systems and those of the broader institutional context in which the units must operate. From this perspective, the capacity for change also depends on the affordances of the normative systems of the organization, rather than only on its economic environment. Neo-institutionalism sees adaptation as the result of a convergence of values and beliefs around the change, and resistance to change as a result of the discordance between the new values and beliefs associated with the proposed change and the existing status quo. The normative system of an organizational unit thus determines, to a large extent, the way in which change does or does not happen, and the extent to which a unit is able to survive within a changing context. From the neo-institutionalist perspective, one must look at the internal value systems of those participating in change rather than focusing on more instrumental relationships with outside stakeholders (see Muller 2003).

Maassen and Gornitzka (1999), following on the work of Tolbert and Zucker (1983), propose that in the view of this theory, the successful adoption of a policy depends on “the extent to which the measure is institutionalized, either by law or by gradual legitimization” (p. 299), and that there is little active choice in an adaptation, that organizational units simply conform to accepted norms and beliefs. Through this theory, organizations combine conformity to external changes with retaining a status quo in their norms and beliefs.

This theory considers the identity and stability of an organization to be of great significance; change has a greater chance of being implemented if the nature of the change is broadly consistent with the identity and value systems of an organizational unit. The more stable the organizational unit and the more well-defined the identities within it, the more difficult it is to institute reforms that may be at odds with these identities (Brunnson and Olsen 1990, March and Olsen 1984 in Maassen and Gornitzka 1999). This opens up an interesting dimension from which to examine interdisciplinary initiatives in terms of the strength and normative frameworks of the identities involved and how those interact with the values of (a relatively stable) institutional context.²

The resource dependency and neo-institutional theories of change allow us to view and describe change from a more structured point of view. By using these two complementary models to form a basis for describing a curricular change initiative we look at an instance of change to see how its implementation has been shaped not only by the competition for resources, but also how the change was facilitated or resisted due to the degree of accordance with the normative system of the organization under scrutiny. These particular models will be used to approach the current cases from a more theorized point of view, and give a framework for the description of how and why these changes happened in the way that they did.

² The work of various curriculum researchers (including Ensor and Moore) points also to the fact that there may be normative differences between individuals *within* organizational units, all the more so in units set up to support cross-boundary initiatives.

3. Research Question

As mentioned above, there are pressures on South African universities to respond to the national higher education transformation agenda by, *inter alia*, creating programmes that are interdisciplinary in nature. In the light of this, this study aims to explore a specific institutional context by conducting two case studies of interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes. The research project aims to a) identify the drivers that have prompted the creation of these specific postgraduate interdisciplinary programmes, and to b) better understand the factors that enhance or inhibit the sustainability of such programmes. It will ask how the social and intellectual challenges which typically accompany cross-disciplinary work impact the sustainability of each of these programmes, and it will assess the ways in which the specific institutional context works to support or inhibit the programme's sustainability (in terms of, for example, funding frameworks, administrative capacity, the university's approach to research and what counts as knowledge production). The case studies focus on interviews with the individuals who initiated these interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes, as well as those who are currently involved in convening them.

This research question will be explored by examining a broader set of sub-questions, as follows.

- What are the drivers that sparked these curriculum initiatives? Were the programmes created as a response to national or local institutional policy, were they prompted by emerging areas of interest within the disciplines involved, did they stem from the social justice commitments of the academics involved, or from a desire to respond to the market or civil society, or a combination of these?
- How were these curriculum initiatives initiated and implemented – was a collegial approach to change applied, or was it a more top-down process? How does this affect the long-term stability?
- Can interdisciplinary programmes (easily) fit into this particular institution's current administrative and resource distribution structure? Why or why not?
- What intellectual and / or social issues have surfaced as a result of these cross-boundary collaborations? Have there been conflicts? Have these been constructive or detrimental to the programmes? How have such conflicts been managed? Are there competing value systems that have informed these issues or conflicts?
- What implications are there for the implementation of future socially responsive interdisciplinary initiatives?

4. Rationale for the study

This research project was informed by a pilot project conducted in late 2003 in which a case study of a programme initiative (which happened to be interdisciplinary) was undertaken in order to better understand how the programme evolved into its current format. During the course of my data collection, I became aware of the surmountable challenges this programme faced, not, as one would expect, primarily in the early phases of its curriculum development and consensus building, but rather in its ability to survive beyond the initial phases once the euphoria of its launch had worn off. I was aware of the social importance of this particular programme, and was thus surprised to learn of the sustainability challenges that it was facing. I could not help but wonder whether this was occurring in this particular circumstance alone, or whether it was a trend that other interdisciplinary programmes were likewise experiencing.

As mentioned in the introduction, South Africa is experiencing an era of widespread change. Higher Education, among the other institutions of society, is under pressure to transform itself. New priorities are continually being set, and institutions are finding themselves faced with the challenge of finding ways to respond to both the economic and social needs of society, without prioritizing one at the expense of the other.

South Africa faces innumerable social challenges, which makes the university's ability to identify national needs, and work towards resolving them, of central importance. Perhaps the strongest motivation behind this study is an interest in how universities respond to social causes with more than just symbolic rhetoric, particularly given the challenging nature of our current and unique historical context. The institutionalization of interdisciplinary programmes is one way in which the socially responsive nature of the university has manifested itself. This research study aims to look more closely at two of these interdisciplinary contexts to better understand what obstacles these programmes face, to examine ways in which these may stem from the inherent difficulty of cross-disciplinary work, and to understand ways in which the institutional context works to support or inhibit such initiatives.

5. Analytical Framework

The aim of this project is to address the research questions posed above regarding interdisciplinary programmes at the postgraduate level, namely, to better understand the drivers which prompt such initiatives, and to understand what enables or obstructs the success of such programmes once implemented. To address these questions, an analytical framework is developed below to enable a theorized account of each of the cases under examination.

It is acknowledged in the literature that curriculum initiatives are generally prompted by either *exogenous* or *endogenous* pressures (see Muller 2003); that is, pressures from both outside the academy and from within the academy can prompt change. A distinction is made between the academy (the disciplines and professions whose primary work relates to the growth of knowledge and perpetuation of the disciplines) and the institution because elements within the institution can sometimes represent the interests of external agencies. In the South African context, these exogenous drivers are generally identified as the “complex generic pressure on higher education institutions to be more ‘responsive’ or more ‘relevant’” (Muller, 2003: p. 102). These pressures often stem from policy and policy-driven funding mechanisms, and the market. Endogenous drivers, on the other hand, are impulses for change that arise from within the academy and its knowledge fields. Endogenous drivers include the existence of new knowledge that may prompt academics to make changes to the curriculum, or a problem which agents in the knowledge field would like to address for either intellectual or ‘public good’ reasons. The analyses below aim to highlight the exogenous and endogenous pressures which have prompted these particular curriculum initiatives. It will also be of interest to consider the motivations of the academics participating in the change initiatives in this context.

According to Muller (2003), the effect which exogenous pressures (policy or the market) actually have on an institution is limited by the endogenous factors of an institution. The endogenous factors include the internal dynamics of change context, including but not limited to “the varying dispositions of the key structural form of the institution (the knowledge disciplines) and their differing amenity to the direction of change suggested by the policies” (Moore, 2004: p. 6). That is, whether the suggested change is amenable, or on the other hand detrimental, to the institutional stakeholders. A second endogenous factor is the *adaptive capacity* of the institution; that is, how equipped an institution is to absorb and to manage change (see Muller 2003). It will be of interest to consider the endogenous factors at work within the institution while considering how well each of these postgraduate interdisciplinary programmes have fared.

When considering curriculum change, particularly change which requires participants to partake in interdisciplinary work, it is crucial that one have a clear understanding of what Bernstein terms an “integrated code” (1975), and the repercussions which can accompany a change to this type of curricular code. Bernstein (1975) provides a framework for understanding curricular types, and discusses the social implications of changing from one curricular type to another. According to Bernstein, there are clear implications for a shift to an integrated code, particularly when considering the social dimension of work, the way that people relate to each other, and the way that authority is structured. A collection code, which is how one would refer to the

traditional discipline-aligned university curriculum, would consist of a more hierarchical structure where academics enjoy a high level of academic autonomy. An integrated code, which is what interdisciplinary work requires, calls for a weakened autonomy in the relationship between individuals due to the collaborative efforts that require a process of shared decision making. In a situation where an integrated code is followed, the operation of authority is at best complex and diffuse. It is the interest of the current study to document whether the cases outlined below have experienced the social and intellectual challenges which typically accompany the shift to an integrated code. Bernstein (1975) will serve as an important frame of reference to discuss these challenges.

It is also of the interest of the current study to document how the specific institutional context works to support or inhibit each programme's sustainability. To discuss the institutional context as experienced by each case, it is essential to lay the groundwork for a better understanding of two approaches to change which are encountered at the university level: the collegial approach to change, and managerialism. Just as curriculum change is prompted by endogenous and exogenous pressures, it can be said that the means by which change is institutionalized also relies on action from agents internal to the initiative, as well as from outside the initiative.

The collegial approach to change, as presented by Knight and Trowler (2001), is a normative approach to change which "assumes that a variety of the needs of individual staff should be met if organizational functioning is to take place and change is to be instituted effectively. It stresses the building of consensus where possible as well as the building of "supportive collegial relationships"; it maintains that "widespread ownership of change is a vital key to success" (p. 9). As a result of participation in and thus ownership of change, the parties involved do not feel that "change is something that happens *to* them, out of their control" (original emphasis) (ibid). Ramsden (1998) describes how collegiality has taken on an "iconic meaning related to values of unselfish collaboration among small groups of scholars", but limits his use of the term to "a form of shared decision making" which gives a sense of community and ownership to those involved in decision-making processes (p. 22).

Although considered by some to be "one of the new orthodoxies of educational change and school involvement" (Hargreaves, 1992: p. 80 in Knight and Trowler 2001), the collegial approach to change has been regarded as somewhat idealistic, and has been criticized for being an unproductive and unfair system under which to work, as well as one that is a poor fit given the demands that the modern massified higher education system has for quicker progress. Among other things, it has been criticized for being painstakingly and inefficiently time consuming, exclusive in its decision-making processes, masking inequalities and hiding accountability (see Knight and Trowler 2001 and Ramsden 1998). It was the collegial system that gave the pre-massified university much of its organizational identity; the shift to a more managerialist system where efficiency and economy are emphasized and individualized decision-making processes have pinched the toes of many has encouraged many to look back to the collegial system as an ideal, glossing over the problems that were part and parcel of it.

Fulton describes managerialism as constituting "not so much a single, distinctive and fundamentally technically-defined approach to management, as a bundle or cluster of

ideologies and practices” (forthcoming: p. 1). In a higher education setting, managerialism describes a situation where change is regarded primarily from a top-down perspective. The values which help inform decision making are strongly directed towards the market and are affected by the changing educational environment, which includes the massification of the higher education system accompanied by shrinking state funding. Economy, efficiency and effectiveness are seen as the overarching goals of activity (see Becher and Trowler, 2001). In contemporary higher education, in addition to collegial working groups, there is management from above which involves attempts to initiate change by inserting strategies, monitoring and steering, and managing academics more closely than in past (and thus impinging on traditional autonomies). The collegial approach to change emphasizes change from within, prompted by choices and value judgments internal to the academy, and thus in agreement with its normative framework. Managerialism, however, brings in a value system that is external to the academy and is often perceived as being in opposition to its fundamental task of furthering knowledge. It will be of interest to identify for each of the cases below the approaches to change that were applied, and how / if this has affected the long-term stability of the initiative.

The key purpose of elaborating upon the cases below in detail is to identify what obstacles there may be for initiatives of this type, in the hope of shedding light on why they succeed or fail. The analytical framework has already outlined how the shift to an integrated code implies certain social challenges in terms of how people relate to each other, and how the collegial and managerial environments into which these changes are introduced can effect the form and the institutionalization of the change. The analysis would not be complete without a discussion of the concept of identity, which determines the way which individuals in such a context are positioned in relation to the adaptive initiative (whether they are disposed towards the adaptation due to its agreement with their normative framework, or because it enables them to protect their own position, or for other reasons). Identity determines how individuals are able to adapt and deal with such social challenges as required by a change in curricular code, and the way they respond to differing approaches to change.

Bernstein (1975) discusses how “strong classification also creates a strong sense of membership in a particular class and so a specific identity” (p. 90). The strong subject loyalty that is fostered among members of a discipline is considered by Bernstein to be “the linch-pin of the identity” (p. 96). The shift to an integrated code calls for re-socialization into a new cognitive territory, with new intellectual and social demands, and thus, subject loyalty (or, in the cases below, a loyalty to the adaptive project). The dominance of identity, and the centering of academic lives around the discipline (see Henkel 2000), makes it more difficult for individuals to commit to any change that would necessitate a change or challenge to the primary commitments of that identity.

Each case will also be examined to better understand how it fares within the organizational and contextual challenges as documented in the literature. Specifically, the analyses below will focus on how one’s participation in interdisciplinary work can affect career development and how the lack of structures in terms of funding and administration affects the stability and feasibility of such programmes (see Rowland 1992 and Mudroch 2002). It will also explore whether

these interdisciplinary endeavors have faced obstacles in terms of being accepted by the larger academic profession, as displayed by the ability to find forums for publication and presentation of knowledge produced and the attitudes of others as experienced by informants.

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6. Research design/methodology

This study is built upon the assumption that the development of interdisciplinary programmes at the postgraduate level is impacted by the way in which individuals relate to each other and to their context whilst knowledge from differing disciplines is brought together. An assumption is also made that institutions with well established disciplinary structures may not necessarily be equipped to mount and sustain interdisciplinary initiatives. It assumes that some individuals who are bound to established disciplinary identities may find it more difficult to move beyond the boundaries of their discipline and become socialized into a new identity, particularly if the requirement to integrate with other disciplines has been mandated by an external force rather than from internal innovation within their own discipline or their own social commitments. The current study is predicated on a speculative assumption that interdisciplinary initiatives at the postgraduate level may be less contested than initiatives encountered at the undergraduate level. It assumes that because postgraduate work is closer to the actual production of knowledge, the crossing of disciplinary boundaries may be facilitated by the collaboration on a shared knowledge production project. It also assumes that the national transformation agenda's call for interdisciplinarity, specifically that which is socially responsible in nature, is reflected in institutional priorities.

For this study, data was collected regarding two interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes at one institution. The formal method of research is the case study, and it focuses on data collected mainly from interviews with the individuals who initiated these particular interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes, as well as those who are currently involved in convening them. Three individuals were interviewed for each of the cases. The data for one of the case studies was collected in 2003 during a pilot case study; this case study necessarily informed the protocol for the second case study. It is therefore acknowledged that the data generated in the second post-pilot phase of the study followed a protocol which was more direct and purposeful in method than the protocol followed in the pilot. The corpus of data collected for the 2003 pilot was much larger, and the interview questions within that protocol were created with the purpose of documenting a particular change initiative. The differing protocols very likely influenced the nature of the data generated in that, had a more focused protocol been followed for the pilot phase and the informants asked a series of pointed questions regarding the obstacles they faced, it is possible that the data generated could have been different. The data from 2003 was re-analyzed in the light of the 2004 protocol.

The case study, as described by Yin (1994), is the preferred method of research when "a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 9). In Yin's terminology, this research project is considered to be a "multiple-case holistic" design in that the individual cases are analyzed separately and in relation to the institutional context in which they occur. Two separate case studies are made for comparative purposes; the units of analysis are two postgraduate programmes which occur in the same institutional context. The literature review above identified the challenges which arise as a result of the institutional context. It is hoped that the current project will not only shed light on each of these change contexts, but illuminate the ways in which the

challenges they face are related to the institutional circumstance which they have in common.

Two units of analysis have been chosen which are ostensibly similar in that they are both Masters in Philosophy interdisciplinary programmes that appear to be socially responsive in nature. The logic underlying this selection is that it is more likely that patterns between the two will emerge, resulting in similar findings (or a literal replication according to Yin 1994). However, important and illuminating differences may also emerge.

Data collected during interviews is the main source of evidence. Three individuals were interviewed for each case; they are the key individuals involved in each of the interdisciplinary initiatives, as well as those currently convening the programmes, when they are different.³ These individuals come from varied disciplinary backgrounds. The interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions and lasted from one to two hours each. I was the only researcher gathering data; however, another researcher was present and assisted me in one of the interviews. When permission was granted, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. When informants chose not to be recorded (one individual), notes were typed during the entire interview, and specific segments of the interview were transcribed verbatim.

As suggested by Yin (1994), various precautions have been taken to ensure the quality and validity of this research study. Construct validity has been improved through the use of multiple sources of evidence (multiple informants for each case). All informants were also asked to review drafts of the findings and make comments; three informants did so. The responses varied from very concise replies that simply communicated their approval, to a more detailed reply with criticism of the way in which the role of one actor was “inflated”, as well as voicing concern regarding the anonymity of the informants. All comments were taken into consideration in the revision of subsequent drafts. External validity is strengthened by using a replication logic in a multiple-case design.

The transcripts from interviews have been analyzed for ways in which they present similar features, that is for ways in which interviewees have experienced similar contextual and social challenges. The texts have also been analyzed for areas of contrast; that is, the ways in which they have had differing contextual and social challenges. It is acknowledged that, as Ensor (1997) points out, interviews “do not straightforwardly provide windows on different worlds, be they inner or outer ones. Rather, they are constituted through representations of these worlds through selective description and re-description” (p. 249). The data collected from interviews has thus been treated accordingly as accounts of events, rather than factual information. The subjective perceptions and beliefs of the informants, and of the interviewer, have been taken into consideration. O’Connell (1994) cautions that

“In setting up interviews, the researcher is setting up a series of *social* interactions between interviewers and the human subjects of the research. Both interviewer and respondent bring to the interview a set of subjective

³ Although other staff members were involved in the initiatives, the ones identified for interviewing were the chief participants and thus in the best position to inform this study.

beliefs, expectations, values and so on, which could potentially obscure and distort the truth” (p. 117).

The social nature of the interview context clearly affects the type of answers produced. Five out of the six informants had no previously established social relationship with the researcher; one informant was known by the researcher. The relationship and trust issues that accompany relationships and the participants’ perceived positionality may very well have affected the types of responses generated, and in the analysis this was taken into consideration. However, no significant discrepancies, or withholding of information, was apparent from the analysis.

The study does not claim to be exhaustive, but simply to help shed light on two particular postgraduate interdisciplinary programmes in a particular institutional context. It is acknowledged that the data collected is very much qualitative in nature and is not factual evidence, but individuals’ interpretations of their own context. It is also acknowledged that in its analysis, the data has gone through another layer of interpretation by the researcher, and that the findings presented in this minor dissertation are my own representation of two specific occurrences in this particular institutional context. The findings have been placed in the context of the discussion introduced by the literature review, and are then linked to the theoretical discussions introduced in section 2.5 above. Each of the cases was analyzed in the light of the analytical framework developed in section five above. Each interview transcript was analyzed to identify whether the pressures which have prompted these initiatives were, in the eyes of the informant, exogenous or endogenous in nature. The transcripts were then analyzed in order to document whether the social and intellectual challenges which typically accompany the shift to an integrated code were experienced. Each transcript was then analyzed to identify the approach to change which was put into practice, as well as examined to better understand if the data affirms or refutes the organizational and contextual challenges as documented in the literature.

7. Research Ethics

There are certain ethical implications of this research, the most significant issue being the anonymity of the human subjects involved. As the content covered in the interviews is of a sensitive nature and possibly related to individual job security, it was important that permission to record the interviews was obtained. As several informants wished to remain unidentified, precautions were taken in writing up the research to prevent the informants from being identified. As a result, the programmes are not referred to by their true names, and the institution has remained unidentified. In addition, all informants were given the opportunity to read drafts of the findings of the case studies so that they could express their thoughts regarding the fairness of representation and their anonymity. Three of the informants supplied the researcher with comments.

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8. Case Study A

8.1 Introduction / Context

Moore and Lewis write that “it is clear that we need to understand the social and organizational conditions under which new curriculum initiatives can emerge in sustainable ways” (2002: p. 17). Case Study A, which was undertaken in 2003, was an attempt to explore and understand the social and organizational conditions for one such emerging curriculum initiative at a South African university. What resulted was not only insight into these conditions, but an insight into the challenging position in which an interdisciplinary programme at the postgraduate level had found itself.

Case Study A examines a context at a South African university where a socially responsive curriculum change initiative was introduced and implemented. This university is a relatively elite, historically advantaged and research-focused university, with relatively well-developed intellectual and managerial resources. According to Muller (2003), the way an institution responds to change, as well as its adaptive capacity, is based on internal conditions and circumstances, which are somewhat historically determined. This interdisciplinary Masters of Philosophy in HIV/AIDS Studies (henceforth MPhil A), is an interdisciplinary degree administratively housed in the Graduate School of the social sciences and arts faculty at this university. The degree is built around a core course that is built upon knowledge from 13 different disciplines, delivered by 16 lecturers based in four different faculties and one unit. The programme, which took in its first cohort of students in July 2002, can be described as an illustration of change implemented collegially. The initiative will be described in light of the analytical framework developed above, drawing on data collected in the field. Finally, this case will be analyzed in the light of the theory introduced in section 2.5 as an instance of adaptive response.

8.2 MPhil A: The Initiative

The analytical framework above outlined the various drivers which prompt curricular change; these drivers were identified as being endogenous (internal to the academy), and exogenous (external to the academy). When reviewing the case under study, it was apparent from all informants that the drivers applicable in this particular change context were predominantly endogenous and thus driven by individuals within the academy.

At a university-wide meeting in 2001 it was first suggested by members of the institution that there be interdisciplinary Masters level coursework to address HIV/AIDS in South Africa; this suggestion, coming from among the academic staff, eventually manifested itself as the creation of MPhil A. This meeting was drawn together by a university dean and attended by lecturers from across the disciplines. In the excerpt below, the informant discusses the awareness, on the part of academics in the institution, of a particular social need, which needed to be addressed for ‘public good’ reasons.

We realized that we needed to be, as an educational institution, we also needed to get the issues around HIV/AIDS thoroughly embedded in our curriculum. And we launched that with a workshop across all the faculties to discuss how we could actually introduce HIV/AIDS into the curriculum. ... [There is] a

growing recognition that we need, are going to need to prepare a wide range of professionals who are equipped to deal not only with the direct public health and medical issue of HIV/AIDS but also the consequent social issues. What I would actually call the sort of secondary consequences of the epidemic. (Dean One)

The endogenous pressure to become more responsive, which began as a “growing recognition” on the part of some academics of a particular need in society, was the catalyst necessary for this change initiative to take root. Rather than policy or the market playing a role in prompting this curriculum change (typical exogenous pressures), it was a realization that the university had a role in dealing with a health issue crucial to society. From the data gathered from all three informants, and judging by the response of the large numbers of staff taking part in the meeting, it seems that the initiative was seen to be broadly amenable to the internal dynamics of the academy; or, at least was not seen as being at odds with existing priorities.

The idea of an interdisciplinary Masters degree dealing with issues connected to HIV/AIDS originated from this meeting, and was taken on by a management-level administrator, who took it on, according to the dean interviewed, because the administrator felt that it was “a contribution that the faculty needed to make”. The data seems to strongly indicate that the change was regarded as an intrinsically-derived contribution, rather than a response to an outside pressure.

The adaptive capacity of an institution is one factor which determines whether an institution is capable of absorbing change (see Muller 2003). The presence of individuals who are willing to take on such challenges, also clearly effects the institution’s ability to adapt. A combination of intellectual and administrative resources accompanied by individuals who are willing to absorb the costs of change is what Moore (2003) terms the “adaptive capital” of an institution. From the interviews, it seems clear that the intellectual resources as well the individuals who were willing to absorb the personal costs of this initiative allowed MPhil B to proceed.

The institution marshaled existing resources within the institution. A senior lecturer was approached and asked if she would be willing to create a proposal for a Masters level programme. Her response suggests that the responsibility for this initiative came as an add-on to her existing range of duties.

I had some moments of anxiety because I had work plans and I hadn’t anticipated suddenly having to do this. But I said yes, thinking rather naively that it would be a fairly short-term thing, and that I could do the proposal and then get on with the rest of my life. (Lecturer One)

Despite her reluctance, she was willing to bear the cost of fueling the initiative, thus providing the adaptive capital necessary for the initiative to proceed. From the point that Lecturer One took on the task of creating the proposal, the initiative can best be described as using the collegial approach to change. A process of information gathering, consensus building, and collegial cooperation across faculties took place, taking stock of the relevant intellectual capital distributed across the institution.

I drew together some people, 4 people actually [from different faculties], and we formed a little sort of think tank and started to think about how we'd go about this process. And then we solicited, one of the things that we thought we should do was find out what was going on in the faculty [in relation to HIV/AIDS] and it was quite revealing, there's an awful lot of work going on, but most of it's hidden, it doesn't really appear in course outlines and so on. But we had a meeting with about 20 people from the faculty to discuss the possibility of a course. That was really very very exciting. (Lecturer One)

While in the processes of formulating the curriculum, content and aims of the programme, Lecturer One and her colleagues thought and talked in detail, negotiating what the course would entail; these discussions were described by Lecturer One as "endless and lengthy".

In addition to the model upon which MPhil A would be based, lengthy discussions took place regarding whether the graduate school would present a curriculum that was based on applied knowledge, or one which was built upon more intrinsic, intellectual values. These discussions are described by two informants below.

That's a very long debate we had in our little group over many many weeks, indeed months, was what was our role as a university. And we finally after much, not tortuous in the sense that it was conflictual, but much breast-beating and browbeating decided that actually our role is one of critical engagement with a transformative project. That we are not hands on policy, we're not hands-on-out-there-in-the-field-doing-things people, but that our role is perhaps to stand back and to use our skills, the training we've all had, to reflect on what's happening, and hopefully by asking sharper questions, suggest ways of looking at old problems maybe more creatively or more imaginatively. (Lecturer One)

We realized that when we were trying to anticipate who would come [and register as students], who would be interested, that there would be practitioners who really wanted a immediate, direct, concrete, input from the course into their daily work. And I think we realized that we would not be able to do that. And consequently we asked the question "what do we do best?". We do, our stock and trade is intellectual and critical thinking and analysis and, therefore, that I think set the path for the course. ... We are not people with either the knowledge, skill or experience of being at the coal face. Our skill is in the area of dealing with ideas, critical interrogation, and that's what the course is about. (Lecturer Two)

When analyzing the data collected in conjunction with Case Study A, the positive aspects of the collegial approach to change seemed to be demonstrated during the formation and implementation of this change initiative. This collegiality surfaced in the extensive processes that were gone through to build consensus from the origin of the initiative through its implementation. An example of collegial cooperation was the formation of a group of four to cooperatively create the curriculum and to develop the intellectual slant of MPhil A. Collegialism also surfaced in the meetings convened to gather information about current related offerings and in the staff meetings regarding the evaluation and further development of the core course after

implementation. At all stages of the implementation, input was asked for and given, and consensus was reached (albeit not always quickly and easily) among those involved in the creation of the course. As suggested by Ramsden (1998), “exceptional achievements in the academic world are frequently the result of collaborative effort” (p. 162). I would suggest that the creation of MPhil A is one such achievement. Along with this consensus building and cooperation, ownership of MPhil A was distributed beyond the author of the original proposal, to her team of four from across the faculties, to the larger interdisciplinary team that eventually became involved in the course through teaching on it.

Collegial approaches to change have been criticized for being inefficiently time consuming, exclusive in decision-making processes, masking inequalities and hiding accountability (see Knight and Trowler 2001 and Ramsden 1998). The only one of these negative aspects of the collegial approach that surfaced in the data collected in conjunction with Case A was the amount of time-consuming negotiations that took place during the planning phases of the programme. Perhaps the initiative was not implemented as quickly as it could have been had another approach been used. It is doubtful, however, that a top-down approach would have worked as successfully given that the topic of MPhil A is a very new field of study without a well-established knowledge base. As a result of this, the course needed to gain legitimacy and support from across disciplinary boundaries. In addition, given that MPhil A is unique in that there are few if any other programmes like it in the world⁴, effectively, a new field of study was in the making, with little or no intellectual precedents available to draw on. Thus, a collegial approach was needed to accumulate the expertise needed to run a course of this sort.

8.3 The Challenges Faced by MPhil A

Bernstein (1975) discusses how a shift from a collection code to a more integrated code with weaker boundaries between the disciplines, calls for changes in the way that people relate to each other. It calls for changes to the way that authority is structured (often at a loss to individual autonomy), the way that knowledge is structured, and what is counted as knowledge. Bernstein cautions that integrated codes may work only “when there is a *high* level of ideological consensus among the staff” (p. 107) regarding these issues. Case A, as indicated by the data below, will very likely face challenges arising from judgments on curriculum, transmission, and evaluation.

In the excerpt below, one of the conveners refers to the loss of autonomy that occurs as part of interdisciplinary work and the social challenges that accompany this. Lecturer One discusses the assignments which are a part of the core course for MPhil A, and how the essays assigned during the course were not as consistent as the conveners would have liked, resulting in the need to centralize power.

We sort of let the teachers set the assignments. This year I’ve intervened more, and next year I shall be quite directive, and impose my own, I don’t mean me, but our, shape on them. Because people are coming from disparate disciplinary bases, with different ideas about what constitutes an essay and we

⁴ McMillan (2003) reports that this is the first degree of its kind in South Africa, and possibly the only of its type in the English-speaking world.

need to actually shape them. ...That's where we've trodden very gently because you can't intervene in expert lecturers modes of presentation, content, how they turn out their essays. ...My approach has been to be less interventionist, but it's getting to be more so as I get more confident. As we've had two runs, and as we've had people, and in the first place we were beggars, asking people to come and they all agreed to work with us so we felt like we had to at least give them some sort of autonomy, but now we know that there are people who will work with us, and so we can do it, not us telling them but try to have a team approach. (Lecturer One)

This example of the need to move towards a more team-like approach, away from individual autonomy, is a classic example of the shift from a collection code to an integrated code. The convener of the programme is facing the reality that the pedagogic shape of the programme will need to be determined by more centralized means, thus weakening the autonomy of the other academics involved in the programme. The first two runs of the program were less coherent than ideal, but involved more individual autonomy; this autonomy will now need to be sacrificed to improve coherence. The pedagogic methods and content of the programme will need to be either negotiated collegially, which is often a huge commitment in terms of time, or dictated by the convener of the programme. Whichever approach is taken to re-constitute the pedagogic shape of MPhil A, the way in which the individual academics within the program relate to each other may change significantly. The negotiations which would take place should the collegial approach be applied will place the academics in less autonomous positions as they require the agreement of colleagues on decisions affecting their collaborative project. Should a more centralized approach be taken, the academics will relinquish their autonomy for a more top-down approach. It is probable that not only will relationships change, but as choices are made regarding course content, pedagogy, and evaluation, these will involve value judgments on what is valid and appropriate knowledge to be disseminated through the programme. This could be a significant challenge for those involved.

In addition to the challenges which arise as a result of the shift from a collection code to an integrated code, MPhil A experienced various contextual and institutional obstacles which illustrated the trends described in the literature review.

Career Development

Mudroch (1992) describes a Swiss context where becoming involved in interdisciplinary work has a predominantly negative impact on an individual's career path. With the exception of where involvement in a "quickly upcoming interdisciplinary area...may even lead to spectacular career advancement" (p. 52), he describes a context where "the losses seem to outweigh the gains" (ibid).

One of the predominant themes in the data collected for Case A was the university's notion of what counts as knowledge production, and how this hinders one's ability to do work that is interdisciplinary in nature, and in particular to work as part of MPhil A. Both lecturers cited how little credit was given to them for working on such a programme, and one lecturer, who is a current co-convener, focused on the promotion system in particular and how this discourages one from being involved with such interdisciplinary initiatives.

I think that one of the major issues, and I have thought about this a great deal, is how you get a transformative agenda going, and I think, and it's a subject dear to my heart at this moment, but I think one of the principle impediments to transformation is the promotion system, because if you don't, I applied for promotion and was turned down, I went to see our dean today to find out why and what I had to do, and he basically said, I wanted to be promoted from senior lecturer to associate professor, he said you've got to have 8 peer reviewed publications, and supervise, have supervised 4 PhDs or masters by research, and I said what about other things. No they don't count actually, the fact that you've had a PhD for donkey's years and supervised a PhD successfully, and run this course and brought in the revenue is of no consequence, what counts is these peer reviewed publications. ...One of the reasons I applied was because I wanted to see if this work would be acknowledged by the university since it was a task they had given me, and indeed it hasn't been at all. Although they say it counts for some of the points, but it doesn't, it wasn't enough to allow me to be promoted.

...This point is a huge issue, because until recognition is given to people who are doing innovative curriculum development work, then things won't change. And where am I left now in this process? If I go on doing what I'm doing, I'll never be promoted, because I'm not superwoman. (Lecturer One)

Lecturer Two mentioned that difficulties are faced not only by the lecturers who convene such courses but also by the academics who teach on them.

...in some departments, a teacher would actually get no credit at all for doing this teaching. So one says, what's in it for the teacher? Several hundred rand is not nearly going to get close to what the person puts into preparation so cross-disciplinarity really often produces a situation where the obstacles to people in involving themselves are very considerable. (Lecturer Two)

The data indicates that, like the Swiss context as described by Rowland, this particular South African context is considered by those interviewed to be one where the losses outweigh the gains in terms of career advancement.

Institutional Funding Priorities

At the onset, this interdisciplinary initiative had powerful sponsorship at a rhetorical level from individuals located in fairly senior positions at the university; the data indicates that this rhetorical sponsorship was not followed up as well as it should have been by administrative or financial support from within the university.

All of the informants mentioned that at some point in time, MPhil A has been, and will be, at the mercy of faculty level priorities or the priorities of those at higher levels of the university bureaucracy, mainly related with resource allocation. In all of the interviews, the concern surfaced over the fact that MPhil A, since its earliest days, has always depended upon the funding priorities of others. In the excerpt below, Lecturer One reflects on the initial struggle with the university's shifting funding priorities.

We went to the university's development office to get funding, and that was a dead loss. ...We weren't a priority; we'd been up and down the priority list

...we've been a priority and not a priority but the end result is that if you have more than one priority you don't have priorities, or you do but you go for number one, and two, three and four fall off the map. (Lecturer One)

As it was unable to secure funding from the university, MPhil A is currently funded by a British aid organization. Funding has been secured for the first three years of the programme. For the time being, financial resources will not affect the running of the programme. In future, however, this will change.

After three years, the third run of our core course, it seems to me that the university then has to decide whether it's taking this on or not. ... So as a matter of principle I wouldn't be inclined to apply for funding after this. (Lecturer One)

Despite the relative security of the external funding, it was understood that eventually these financial resources would cease, and that the programme would be back at the mercy of the institution's funding priorities. The data indicated that this created a sense of unease and uncertainty among the participants. As one informant explains,

And clearly from day one in our minds was well, what happens in the next year when outside funding does not, is not guaranteed? ...for a very long time [we] tried to get the director of the graduate school to, as it were, bat for this course in senate to say 'yes the course is up and running now but no thanks to any resources from [the university], in future years some funds have to be provided'. And I'm afraid the director, he was never negative, he also never actually did anything. (Lecturer Two)

When these funds have finished, however, the same informant describes how the interdisciplinary nature of the programme actually adds to the problem of shifting resource priorities.

...when the purse is empty I am not so sure that [the university] will be as actively keen to associate itself with this course. ...for a whole variety of reasons, it's a problem child. It doesn't easily fit into the existing models. And so it is one which does cause difficulties because it cuts across the administrative framework so it's not one I think which sort of immediately endears itself to administrators. (Lecturer Two)

Becher and Kogan (1992) write that "resource allocations are a metaphor for the allocation of values" (p. 83). With this in mind, and understanding the shifting priorities of a massified higher education system, one which is under pressure to increasingly value efficiency and market responsiveness, it is easy to suspect that an interdisciplinary "problem child" which responds to social rather than economic issues, could possibly be valued less and less by environments that are more responsive to exogenous policy and market-driven pressures.

Shifting Administrative Framework

Although the MPhil A initiative, up to this point in this case study, has been described as a collaborative, collegial project, it would be false to say that all the forces shaping the project were described by the data as collegial. The data indicates that there were

strongly managerial values which affected not the content or the values of the programme itself, but the administrative framework to which it belongs. This has had the effect of, in the words of one informant, “completely contradicting the very intellectual basis of the course” (Lecturer Two), and as a result possibly threatening the long-term stability of the course. These top-down management practices are described below.

It is at the postgraduate level that teaching and learning is most closely related to the task of perpetuating the discipline by creating new knowledge and apprenticing new members into a shared community of practice. It is for this reason that teaching at the postgraduate level is generally more appealing to members of the academy. The politics involved in the formation of a graduate school of social sciences and arts at this particular institutional context, an entity formed with the intention of administering postgraduate teaching and learning, placed MPhil A in a position of vulnerability due to the contested nature of this administrative framework to which it belonged. The Graduate School was contested by certain powerful members of the academy who did not agree with its existence.

There were tensions...between the dean ... and the establishment of the Graduate School, which predated him but with which he didn't agree. So that it became politically a bit of a hot potato because he didn't particularly, he didn't want a graduate school. His argument was that if you had a [graduate school] what you would be doing is robbing postgraduate departments of their postgraduate teaching, so they simply become undergraduate teaching departments. I don't think that's the case at all, because you can still have disciplinary based Masters but have some courses that stand above the disciplines precisely because they draw in from all of them. But he didn't buy that model, he wasn't convinced by it, so there was a very uneasy, and sort of I imagine struggle between him and the people who were in support of the Graduate School. (Lecturer One)

As a result of this “struggle” between a particular dean and the Graduate School, MPhil A experienced, in contrast to the bottom-up, collegial processes that had previously been described by the data, top-down management decisions which affected the administrative framework within which it was housed. One informant describes how

...the end effect of that was that in the middle of last year by administrative fiat, we were re-located within the Sociology department; actually we straddle both, our core course is in Sociology, the rest of the degree is still a Graduate School degree. So it's an interesting space to be in. (Lecturer One)

Another informant describes that as the result of a

loss of momentum and indeed a less than cordial, or less than easy relationship between the faculty and the graduate school, last year quite a lot of stripping of courses from the graduate school authority was undertaken, and one of the courses which was stripped away, at least formally, was the core course [of MPhil A], which was lodged in the department of Sociology. (Lecturer Two)

In theory, managerialism describes a situation where change initiatives are driven primarily from a top-down perspective and the values which help inform decision making are strongly directed towards the market or towards responding to a changing environment for higher education. What emerges from the data was that, in addition to the politics surrounding the existence of the graduate school, administrative capacity was also an issue.

... It was done without any consultation with those of us who ran the course, and consequently the graduate school really has at the moment no formal purchase on the course, the core course is in Sociology. ... Because it was deemed that the Graduate School could not sustain administratively a range of courses, and that's part of that sort of downgrading and diluting of the graduate school, so courses which had previously been lodged there, were stripped out. Relocated, and the core course for [MPhil A] was one of those. (Lecturer Two)

The discussion above illustrates the divergent priorities at various levels within the institution, where administrative priorities may be in tension with academic priorities. It seems like a harmless change from the outside, but as the data describes below, this has fairly serious implications for the stability of the course from the intellectual as well as the resource allocation perspective.

...it suggests that it is not interdisciplinary, it suggests that its main weight is in Sociology. ...it had no right to have been moved, without asking us or seeking out our opinion, or indeed, completely contradicting the very intellectual basis of the course... HIV/AIDS can only be comprehended in a holistic cross-disciplinary way, and to lodge it in a single department, immediately you send out a very clear message. So, it's got caught up in much wider academic and administrative, intellectual politics.

If the course is then run by a department, the department then decides whether the course is appropriate or whether the course should indeed draw in all of these non-sociologists, and whether in fact the course should run. And that seems to me to be absolutely crazy, because it's not a sociology course, it's being housed there, but the implications of housing it there are very considerable. Intellectually, as I argued, it seems to make nonsense of the multi-disciplinary approach required and administratively and in terms of actual allocation of resources, it seems to have all of the potential, if the head of the department of Sociology were to say "let's have a look at my postgraduate courses with an SOC code, oh, this one, doesn't look as if it's really doing much for my department, we're going to cut it" he or she is at liberty to do so. So I really have major objections both intellectually and administratively to this but it's part of a much wider issue of the relationship between the faculty and the graduate school. (Lecturer Two)

In this case study, we have seen that a change initiative of an interdisciplinary nature was implemented collegially through a process of consensus gathering and shared decision-making and hence ownership. Interdisciplinarity, as discussed in the literature review, is both a desired and contested element of contemporary higher education which is not easily implemented. It seems that the collegial approaches to

change aided the successful implementation of interdisciplinary MPhil A, but top-down managerialist approaches to change without consultation of those “at the coal face” may have counteracted those collegial efforts to a certain extent, threatening not only the interdisciplinarity that was so carefully cultivated, but the long term sustainability of this unique programme. Moore and Lewis explain how “senior management’s adoption in some cases of unfortunate command-and-control business management styles has created the dark background against which the golden ideals of collegiality are seen to shine brightly” (2002: p. 13); this case study may be a good illustration of this.

Administrative Capacity

Mudroch (1992) refers to a Swiss context where a “lack of structures for supporting interdisciplinary activities” results in interdisciplinarity surviving mainly “due more to the initiative of individual persons or groups than to any established institutions” (p. 53). Although this context was described as being rich in adaptive capital at the outset in terms of the intellectual and dispositional resources, the data reflects a poverty of the administrative resources needed to manage the interface between the incommensurate administrative systems of the interdisciplinary initiative on the one hand and the discipline-based institution on the other. Surfacing quite readily in the data was that the institutional context lacked the capacity to administer interdisciplinary programmes such as MPhil A. As one informant describes,

...the university is organized, as most universities are, on a disciplinary basis; that is the intellectual format of the university, and then on top of that comes the administrative framework. This is a course which cuts right across that, so for a whole variety of reasons, it’s a problem child. It doesn’t easily fit into the existing models. And so it is one which does cause difficulties because it cuts across the administrative framework so it’s not one I think which sort of immediately endears itself to administrators, and for all its pronouncements about multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary and cross-faculty teaching, [this university] actually, administratively, is a nightmare to do teaching of this sort. So the course, on purely administrative levels, is also one which is not easily drawn to the breast of [this university] and fits in very snugly, quite the reverse. (Lecturer Two)

This same informant explains how the programme set up its own administrator to make up for the lack of capacity that was available from the institution.

I think we began to realize that more and more we were becoming...orphans. And the graduate school had been very happy to announce our birth, but as we grew the graduate school rather shirked its parental responsibilities. And because it cost the graduate school nothing, because it cost the university nothing, the course was able to run. And effectively what happened is that the administrative costs have been borne by the course itself ...we eventually set up our own in-house administrator. And so it’s a process by which the graduate school has increasingly showed a lack of ability, I don’t know about a lack of willingness, but the lack of ability to underwrite the course administratively and in the wider university politics. (Lecturer Two)

Similar to the Swiss context discussed by Mudroch (1992), this South African context appears to be one whose survival relies on individual contributions to the institution's adaptive capital, rather than any structures that are in place to promote or maintain interdisciplinarity.

Academic Recognition

The literature review outlines several obstacles that lie in the way of academics participating in interdisciplinary endeavors. The recognition of their work, within their own profession and from others working outside academia, is one of these obstacles. As described earlier in the literature review, interdisciplinary activities face the "danger of dilettantism" (Mudroch: p. 52), that is, that such academic initiatives will be regarded as not being in-depth or rigorous. The data indicated that perceptions of dilettantism were indeed an obstacle for MPhil A.

One of the challenges to us very early on, I applied to [a philanthropic institution] to their representative in Harare for funding. ... She said to me basically, well why a course around AIDS?, tantamount to saying you wouldn't do a Masters in chicken pox studies, which was a reasonable question, because actually you wouldn't. But it did make me think through some of the issues. And yes, my response would be to say well gender wasn't a subject of study until it became a social issue, race, likewise, media. I mean HIV/AIDS has this overarching impact in every aspect of our lives and is a wonderful subject in its own right for social scientists to grapple with because it does raise every debate in the social sciences, agency, structure, you know, how much are we constrained by our circumstances, how much of an individual choice do we have around things. (Lecturer One)

The lack of seriousness with which interdisciplinary work can be regarded seemed to be compounded by the fact that MPhil A concerns a relatively new field of interdisciplinary study and research.

The literature review describes a context where disciplinary work is not easily publishable for the reason that most academic journals are focused on narrow disciplinary fields and deny interdisciplinary work access to publishing. With the establishment of MPhil A, links had been forged with universities in several different countries, which in turn had illuminated various areas in need of research that unfortunately could not be met. "What this is also spinning off is research that we can't keep up with" (Lecturer One). This inability to heed calls for research was linked to the available time of those involved on MPhil A, as well as resources. The data seems to indicate that rather than a lack of an outlet for publishable works, it is a lack of time and resources which has prevented professional recognition for those involved in MPhil A.

8.4 Theory Application

As discussed earlier in the literature review, when viewing change through the resource dependency theory, we see the choices and changes made within an organization as being pro-active and reactive responses to external forces that hold the key resources necessary for the organization (in the present case study, MPhil A) to function. This theory implies that change is the result of an unequal balance of power

between the organization and its environment, and that thus the organization seeks to optimize its position through a strategic pattern of interactions with the environment.

When viewing this instance of change through the lens of resource dependency theory, we can view the creation of MPhil A as an instance of adaptation that occurred as a reaction to the institutional environment. When using this framework, it is important to examine not only external dependencies, but also the internal power relationships and

the way organizations perceive their environments, how they act to control and avoid dependencies, the role of organizational leadership in these processes, as well as the way internal power distributions affect and are affected by external dependencies (Maassen and Gornitzka, 1999: p. 298).

In Case Study A, we are aware from the data that various issues exist regarding the competition for and allocation of resources. By applying this model, we can view this instance of change as one where the programme sought to optimize its position through strategic interaction with the parts of the environment which control resources as well as the parts with whom it competes for those resources.

The data showed how MPhil A, or the committee which was formed to give shape to MPhil A, interacted with the university environment to optimize its position as a legitimized offering from its very beginning. A great deal of consensus building was carried out within the university community to negotiate the programme's intellectual and organizational legitimacy (or symbolic resources). This interaction with the other organizations within the university was not only an important part of building the knowledge base necessary for developing an interdisciplinary offering of this type, but this consensus building, when viewed through the resource dependency model, also served to help MPhil A gain legitimacy. This in turn increased the programme's ability to compete (albeit unsuccessfully) with the other organizational units within the university for the substantive resources (financial and infrastructural resources) allocated by the governing body of the university. Despite failing to secure funding from the institution, the relationship eventually cultivated with an outside donor enabled the initiative to survive in a setting where interdisciplinary arrangements are not easily accommodated. This, however, raises questions about the longer-term stability in such a context.

This theory of adaptation also views change as happening in such a way that organizations not only control and manage their dependency on those elements that control resource allocation, but also in the ways that organizations *avoid* these dependencies. MPhil A is in an unusual position for a university postgraduate programme in that it is entirely funded by outside sources. Its dependency on the university for substantive resources has been minimized for the time being. Although at first interacting with the university development office in an unsuccessful effort to secure funding, it was a pro-active response to this refusal of funds which led MPhil A to being funded from outside the university. This has led to a dependency of another sort, that being dependency on an outside organization which has not intervened in the shape or content of MPhil A. Although it was not the first choice in modes of funding, perhaps this relationship with an outside funder has optimized the position of the programme, giving it the freedom to develop and establish itself more

autonomously than had it developed itself within the financial and collegial constraints of the university.

With [the external funding] we were liberated, we were able to do exactly what we liked. I was able to buy myself out of teaching, we were able to buy in teachers from across the university to come and work on the course for us, we were able to get administrative support, and so we were able to launch it. (Lecturer One)

Along with this liberation, however, may have come a false sense of security for the programme. Regardless of the symbolic resources which the programme currently has amassed from the university community, and the consensus regarding the desirability of the programme, once the programme enters the competition for substantive resources, this pool of symbolic resources may shift. Organizations who previously did not challenge the programme's existence because they did not see it as competition for substantive resources may begin to see this programme as competition for scarce substantive resources and they may change their tune as far as symbolically supporting the existence of the programme. The real battle for the survival of the programme will begin when the donor money ends.

As covered in the literature review, the neo-institutionalist perspective on change sees change in institutions or organizations as being conditioned also by the value systems circulating within the organization, and the relation between these internal value systems and those of the broader institutional context in which the units must operate. From this perspective, the capacity for change depends also on the affordances of the normative systems of the organization, rather than only on its economic environment.

When using this normative framework to view this instance of adaptation, one could extrapolate from the data that it was a convergence of values and beliefs that allowed for this change to be institutionalized so readily. When in 2001 the MPhil A initiative arose endogenously from within the institution, this call for change was readily accepted because it did not contradict the value systems of those who were involved in the change, and in fact conformed to the norms accepted by and the beliefs held by that group of individuals, and very possibly the wider university community. This conformity of values was illustrated by the symbolic support given from on-high, which unfortunately was not followed up with practical support (in terms of funding and administrative capacity) for this administratively complex endeavor. Thus it is apparent from the data that the value consensus necessary for this change to be institutionalized is not sufficient to ensure the programme's survival. Resourcing patterns and organizational systems must also agree with the change.

9. Case Study B

9.1 Introduction / Context

Case Study B examines a context at a South African university where an interdisciplinary curriculum initiative (henceforth MPhil B) which was both endogenously and exogenously driven was introduced and implemented. Case A and Case B take place in the same institutional context – a relatively elite, historically advantaged university. According to Muller (2003), the way an institution responds to change, (in other words, its adaptive capacity) is based on its internal conditions and circumstances, which are somewhat historically determined. This initiative will be described by drawing on data collected in the field from three informants, two who were involved in the initiation and implementation of MPhil B, and one who is currently convening the programme. The initiative will be described in light of the analytical framework developed above, drawing on data collected in the field. Finally, this case will be analyzed in the light of the theory introduced in section 2.5 as an instance of adaptive response.

9.2 MPhil B: The Initiative

Various drivers which prompt curricular change were outlined in the analytical framework above; these drivers were identified as being endogenous (internal to the academy), and exogenous (external to the academy). When reviewing Case B, the data indicated that in this particular change context, both endogenous and exogenous drivers prompted this change initiative. The concept of a Masters of Philosophy postgraduate programme dealing with the topic of development was conceived in the early 1990s and endogenously driven by individuals within the academy who had an interest in seeing the issue of development addressed. Due to pedagogical differences which were never resolved, the initiative was not successful in that a postgraduate programme was not launched at that time.

It was not until 1997, when an academic from England was invited to mediate the issues stifling these earlier attempts, that it began its development into the program currently listed at this university. As one informant describes,

...he literally took it on board to try to pull together a number of disciplines into development studies programme, at an undergraduate level and a postgraduate level. And so in a sense, he had a lot of free time, and he did a hell of a lot of negotiating, and he pulled together and negotiated and wheeled and dealt all sorts of stuff, and then left. (Lecturer Three)

When examining the development of this Masters of Philosophy postgraduate programme, it is important to take into consideration the national policy events of 1997, which exogenously drove curriculum reform at the undergraduate level. The White Paper (1997) and the Higher Education Act (1997) pressured universities to develop 'programmes' that were interdisciplinary in nature, with the desired effect of promoting curricula that, rather than being centered on the disciplines, were centered on issues more relevant to society (see Muller 2003).

One lecturer describes how "the impetus [for this masters programme] came with the wave of programmatisation" (Lecturer Four). When policy called for reform, there

was a reaction to these exogenous pressures in the form of a concerted movement towards creating programmes at the undergraduate level, as described below.

This programme thing came in, you know, and everybody said you've got to have programmes. I mean in the beginning, you may know this, the Department of Education put out this principle that the national Department of Education would fund only programmes, it wouldn't fund departments. So it was money and big sticks, and all sorts of stuff. So everybody in the whole university was frantically putting together programmes. (Lecturer Three)

After the call for programmes had been made, Lecturer Three, who at the time served as head of his department, was given the information that the visiting academic had earlier generated regarding the establishment of the interdisciplinary graduate programme. He was able to serve as the catalyst of this effort without having to invest as much of the personal resources in terms of time and legwork that would typically accompany the legitimating phases of a project of this type. The impetus necessary for this initiative to proceed had been provided by another individual at an earlier phase.

An interdisciplinary team of four was created to establish the curriculum of the postgraduate programme. At this stage of the programme, not unlike the early 1990s, endogenous drivers also played a part in prompting this initiative. Although it was a policy-driven call for programmes at the undergraduate level that triggered the postgraduate initiative, it was responded to by intrinsic drivers, that is, by individuals within the academy who for intellectual or 'public good' reasons had an interest in seeing this issue addressed at the postgraduate level. One informant described how there was a "sense of need for development professionals if you want... I think this was seen within that context as a contribution to a broader development initiative" (Lecturer Four). The internal dynamics of the change context facilitated the establishment of the postgraduate programme in that the direction of the change coincided with the values of those involved. One informant described how all those involved in putting the programme together "had a passion around development" (Lecturer Five).

In addition to a passion for development and an interest in seeing postgraduate study take root at the university, the data also indicated that the market played a role to exogenously drive the initiative in that there was a demand for such a course from overseas applicants.

The policy-driven frenzy which yielded "money and big sticks" for the restructuring of curricula by the creation of interdisciplinary programmes occurred at a time when this particular institution was experiencing changes in its organizational structure. According to the data, these extrinsic drivers (which came in the form of institutional restructuring and national policies) created an institutional climate which served to confound the intrinsic processes of curriculum formation.

It was a time of huge turmoil, and people were truly running scared at the time. There was a huge amount of stress amongst staff members. Just, in the first 6 months, and I landed in the middle of this being head of department, in the first six months I was head of department, there were I think four or five

academics who collapsed in one way or another out of stress, and they were put out of work in one way or another, for three, four months at a time. And that's just an indication of the kind of context. In a sense it was an incredibly stressful time, and *it was just a very bad time to try to innovate*. There were three, four different massive processes going on at the same time, and in a way they worked against each other. A lot of people were talking about retrenchments, cutting back, the university budget was being cut back as well, so and there were in fact, the Sociology department lost four staff members. So it was just a very difficult time. It was just really stressful. (Lecturer Three, emphasis added)

As another informant describes the institutional climate:

...you have to understand the climate of fear that we were operating in. Course programmes, if they could not be put together, clearly meant it seemed that jobs were on the line, 'cause the message was that if you didn't have successful programmes, there was no reason for you to be there. (Lecturer Five)

The data above clearly indicates that the exogenous pressures towards change had overarching effects on the way in which knowledge from differing disciplines could be brought together, and the way in which people were able to perform at work whilst relating to one another, thus reducing the institution's capacity to adapt. Muller (2003) suggests that the endogenous factors of an institution limit the effect that exogenous pressures can actually have. If this is the case, the endogenous factors in this context, particularly the institution's adaptive capacity, certainly affected how well those involved with this initiative were able to react to the exogenous pressure to reform. Thus we have the ironic situation where institutional and national policy aimed at positive reform creates an atmosphere which confounds endogenous change processes, and at the same time creates an atmosphere which reduces the institution's ability to respond substantively and sustainably to the well-intentioned change mandated from outside the institution.

9.3 The Challenges Facing MPhil B

The data above describes a curriculum change initiative being injected into an institutional context at a point in time when "it was just a very bad time to try to innovate". In addition to the challenges which were posed by the institutional climate, other issues arose to challenge the development of MPhil B.

Authority and Boundary Issues

A collection code (Bernstein 1975), the curricular type employed by the traditional discipline-aligned university, creates an environment where the disciplines are well insulated from each other, and individuals within the confines of the discipline have a large amount of autonomy over the content of the curriculum and the processes by which it is delivered and evaluated. The authority structures are hierarchical and predictable by those who are members of the discipline. A shift to an integrated code calls for a shift to more horizontal relationships with more diffuse authority and less autonomy. The data collected in conjunction with Case B suggests that the shift to a cross-boundary arrangement created challenges for those involved in the initiative. The data also suggests that this shift to a new code and hence new relationships

between disciplines and individuals within those disciplines caused a certain amount of boundary protection on the part of those who experienced discomfort from the weakening of the boundaries that had previously existed between disciplines.

During the development stages of MPhil B, the data reflects a context where members of a certain discipline were uncomfortable with the weakening of boundaries due to a perceived threat from encroachment from what they considered to be an inferior discipline. As one informant describes,

...in terms of you know the disciplinary cross-overs, I think the most interesting disciplinary boundary problem has been between Sociology and Anthropology. Maybe a better way to put it was Anthropology felt that it was “purer” if you like, than Sociology, and they felt that any kind of mixing with Sociology would downgrade what they were doing, so they felt themselves quite threatened by the boundary; I don’t think Sociology felt half as disturbed by that. (Lecturer Three)

Bernstein (1975) discusses how “strong classification also creates a strong sense of membership in a particular class and so a specific identity” (p. 90). The strong subject loyalty clearly displayed by Anthropology in this context, would be what Bernstein would consider to be “the linch-pin of identity” (p. 96) of those individuals involved in the initiative. The shift to an integrated code calls for re-socialization into a new cognitive territory, with new intellectual and social demands, and thus, subject loyalty (in this context, a loyalty to the adaptive project). Bernstein suggests that “any attempt to weaken or *change* classification strength (or even frame strength) may be felt as a threat to one’s identity and may be experienced as a pollution endangering the sacred” (p. 96). The data seems to indicate that the Anthropologists involved in this initiative considered this new collaborative environment to be such a threat. The data suggests that this perception created an atmosphere which complicated the endeavor.

An integrated code offers a context where authority may have to be negotiated amongst a range of different participants. The lack of a concise and predictable chain of authority can be problematic for an interdisciplinary project of this type particularly considering the judgments that must be arrived at regarding the curriculum and its transmission and evaluation. The data indicated that this lack of a clear-cut authority base was problematic in that there was no particular individual responsible (or other means available) for dealing with dissidents like the one described by the data below.

(She) kept saying to us that she was completely overstressed. She wasn’t prepared to do one inch more than she was already doing. So we were continually faced with this ultimatum, you know, either you do exactly what I want, or I pull out. So that was problematic. (Lecturer Three)

The individual described by the data above seems to be asserting an autonomy in a context where cooperation should be taking place. The shift to an interdisciplinary context involved a weakening of autonomy and a lack of a clearly indicated leader to deal with such problems created a challenge for those taking part in the initiative.

Social Organization

Interdisciplinary endeavors can be problematic in that, unlike the disciplines, individuals are not socialized into a particular group over the span of their educational lives, and therefore their identity does not necessarily clearly link them exclusively to the adaptive project, or what Bernstein considers the “linch-pin of the identity” (p. 96). In the case under examination, one informant expressed how “[programmes] are interdisciplinary to the point where they have lost an identity”, and described MPhil B as a “free-floating entity” (Lecturer Four).

Although the dominance of a disciplinary identity can make it more difficult for individuals to commit to any reform that would necessitate a change or challenge to that identity, a strong disciplinary identity may provide a sense of belonging, and an intellectual base from which to create and develop knowledge with the input of peers. The data collected in conjunction with Case B indicated that a lack of identification with a specific class or group was an issue for the convener and the postgraduate students enrolled in the programme. The data suggest that the social or normative basis for solidarity amongst academics has not yet been developed in this context of change. The data collected from the current convener reflects a context where there is no community to which he, as a convener, has become affiliated.

At any level you would have somebody to whom, you'd feel you belong to a community of people at that level, for example the deans advisory committee, programme conveners aren't a part of that community, there is no formal structure [offered] in terms of committees. (Lecturer Four)

This same informant also described how there was also no “formal line of communication” between the convener and the dean, to whom the programme is ultimately accountable. He explains how for the last two years “nobody anywhere amongst the powers-that-be asked any question, there was no sense that the programme was accountable to anybody, which was deeply disturbing” (Lecturer Four). The discomfort experienced by this informant as a result of this lack of a wider community of peers within the faculty and an authority structure may illustrate a need felt by adaptive risk-takers for a system of support while taking the risks that are involved with adaptive ventures.

Within the initiative, the data indicated that there is very little communication between the committee members currently informing the curriculum and the convener. It is suggested that this lack of solidarity within the initiative, whether it be caused by lack of structures in place or other reasons, could affect the intellectual development of the programme, the coherency of the curriculum, and the establishment of a new interdisciplinary community into which new members can be socialized. It is further suggested that, if there is no coherent community of practice, it may be that new members, postgraduate students for example, will struggle to become socialized members of a coherent community of practice, one of the goals of postgraduate education. The data showed that, for postgraduate students, very little community has been established regarding this particular interdisciplinary programme. The data indicated that there is “no integral place” for MPhil B students to seek a sense of community, and that the institution as a whole “doesn't look after students” in terms of forming a social community (Lecturer Five). The lack of a

coherent social organization for this postgraduate programme will very likely continue to create challenges for MPhil B's long-term sustainability.

Organization and Resourcing Patterns

The data strongly indicated that the way in which the university is structured around discipline-based departments through which resources are allocated was considered to be problematic to the endeavor of interdisciplinarity. As one informant elaborated on the dilemma of resourcing interdisciplinary programmes, the university hasn't "crossed that bridge institutionally" (Lecturer Four). The data outlines this issue below.

The absolute beginning obstacle is the question of departmental structure, departmental autonomy, the power the Head of Department. Effectively you would literally have to create a new department of interdisciplinarity for it to function within the university. Because otherwise there is no structure in which it can sit, get funding, etc. Now clearly what I'm raising is an impossibility. So the other alternative is the option of a school. ...What I'm saying to you very strongly is that to do interdisciplinary work, it in effect amounts to a collection of individuals who at this point in time are in departments, none of whom would be willing to leave their department because of that whole discipline story. (Lecturer Five)

If the institution encourages interdisciplinarity, but does not provide for resourcing flows to be modified to support interdisciplinary practices, then it is almost inevitable that the interdisciplinary ventures will be undermined.

Resource distribution was not the only obstacle caused by the disciplinary department structure of the university. Using Nissani's minimalist definition of interdisciplinarity as "bringing together in some fashion distinctive components of two or more disciplines" (Nissani, 1995: p. 120), it follows that individuals from at least two disciplines, and thus two different departments, would need to form a new community of experts for an interdisciplinary project. The data indicated that the crossing of departmental boundaries, however, was impeded by the organizational structure of the university. The data described a context where home departments resented lecturers being "borrowed" to teach on MPhil B, which was external to the department and thus outside a lecturer's and the department's responsibilities.

All you're doing is being borrowed with great resentment from your department. ...I'm teaching more than I should be teaching, but my department does not recognize the work that I do with [MPhil B] despite the fact that at this stage I think more than half the students come from my department, they still see it as outside work. And they were quite categorical in fact last year that it was my choice to do this stuff, and they didn't see it as their problem. (Lecturer Five)

If the university wishes to encourage interdisciplinarity, it follows that not only their resource flow structures, but also their human capital flow structures need to evolve to a stage where individuals can more fluidly move across boundaries and into cross-departmental endeavors.

Rewards and Promotion

The Swiss context described by Mudroch (1992) is one where involvement in interdisciplinary work has a predominantly negative impact on an individual's career path. Except where involvement in a "quickly upcoming interdisciplinary area...may even lead to spectacular career advancement" (p. 52), he describes a context where "the losses seem to outweigh the gains (ibid). The data collected for Case B paints a picture similar to the Swiss context. All of the informants clearly and succinctly responded that the work which they have done on MPhil B has earned them very little in terms of rewards or recognition. When asked if there were rewards that accompanied his work, one lecturer answered with an unequivocal "No", and offered no elaboration (Lecturer Three). "In terms of labour expended," described another informant, "there are not a hell of a lot of rewards" (Lecturer Five). This same sentiment seemed to resonate throughout the data.

When describing the types of rewards which accompany interdisciplinary work, another informant explained how there is

...absolutely none, there may be an intrinsic reward, I don't know if those have any meaning in this place any more. A sense of warmth and so on when a student comes in and says they're pleased. No there isn't any reward, but should there be? ...It's taken an enormous amount of my time, time that an academic wouldn't give to mundane administrative stuff. ...It's this sort of insidious, constant undercurrent, it's a presence that one doesn't shake off easily. (Lecturer Four)

In terms of promotion within the university structure, one informant explained how the interdisciplinary work that she produces does not conform to the standard practices of her department and is therefore not recognized.

I'm not focused within a discipline. In my department it's quite clear, it effects promotion, salary increases, in that sense yes, I'm too scattered, I'm in [MPhil B], I'm in [my discipline], to me they're all integrated, but they don't manifest themselves into a mainstream product. So I am not delivering within my discipline. (Lecturer Five)

The data indicates that, like the Swiss context as described by Rowland, this particular South African context is also considered by those interviewed to be one where the losses outweigh the gains in terms of career advancement.

Support from above withdrawn

During the early days of MPhil B, according to two informants, there was support given and funding promised from upper levels of the university which was later retracted. As one informant described: "[Name omitted] offered us R100,000, but we never got it, because things change" (Lecturer Five). This was regarded by another informant as an obstacle due to the demoralization which it caused.

...we got very enthusiastic support from the upper echelons of the university. So at the time the person driving the process was [name omitted], he was the most senior deputy vice chancellor at the time, and he was very enthusiastic about what we were doing, and in fact at one stage he promised us R100,000

to run the thing, to get things up and running, to send staff overseas to go and look at programmes in other countries and that kind of stuff. You know the next time we came round to him and said where's the money, he said "what money?", and it had just kind of evaporated. That was possibly another reason why the enthusiasm disappeared a little bit, you know there was bureaucratic double speak. (Lecturer Three)

The data did not indicate why this administrator retracted his promise of funding.

Increasing Managerialism

In theory, managerialism describes a situation where values which help inform decision making are strongly directed towards the market, change is regarded primarily from a top-down perspective, and economy, efficiency and effectiveness are seen as the overarching goals of activity. The data referred to the managerialist trends of the university, and how increased assessment of staff members has put academics under more constraints. This in turn has decreased their ability to take part in initiatives such as the establishment of MPhil B.

I think that the process of managerialising and marketising the university is a process that has come from Maggie Thatcher's time, and spread globally. So it's a major movement. And along with it has been much more detailed assessment of staff members, so that staff members spend a lot of time filling in forms which allows either the university hierarchy or sometimes for example in England the government inspectors to come and check on them and assess their performance. That in itself has been a major demoralizing factor I think in all academic institutions. And it leads to plummeting kind of levels of generosity. There was a time when universities ran on the basis of sort of a collegial spirit, and that has disappeared I think completely, so that you can't get people to do extra things these days because they are so kind of panicky about their own status and their own survival. They don't have extra time to do anything. ...it certainly did [discourage people from taking part in interdisciplinary initiatives] at the time I was trying to put together this thing, and I think it makes people very careful about their time. (Lecturer Three)

Considering that the data has indicated that initiatives of this type require individuals who are disposed to giving of themselves with no clear reward, the managerial assessment of staff will likely have a detrimental effect on endeavors of this type. The data above also illustrates how perceptions of managerialism may work to erode adaptive capital and alienate individuals from the institution. This suggests that to avoid creating such impressions, management decisions in academic settings need to be very carefully mediated.

9.4 Theory Application

To discuss the MPhil B initiative through the lens of resource dependency and neo-institutional theory, it is helpful to reflect on the drivers which prompt curricular change that were outlined in the analytical framework above; these drivers were identified as being endogenous (internal to the academy), and exogenous (external to the academy). When reviewing Case B, the data indicated that in this particular

change context, both endogenous and exogenous drivers had prompted this change initiative.

The analysis of Case B above outlined the exogenous drivers of MPhil B as being both policy and market-driven. These included the national policy events of 1997 which called for the creation of 'programmes' that were interdisciplinary in nature, with the desired effect of promoting curricula that, rather than being centered on the disciplines, were centered on issues more relevant to society (see Muller 2003). One informant described the policy as offering "big money and sticks". This policy environment exogenously drove curriculum reform at the undergraduate level, and triggered the development of this postgraduate programme. The market was also cited as an important exogenous driver in that there was a high demand from prospective students for a postgraduate programme focusing on development.

The analysis above also elaborated on the endogenous drivers of this particular curriculum change initiative. The data suggested that the internal dynamics of the change context facilitated the establishment of the postgraduate programme in that the direction of the change coincided with the values of those involved. The individuals who were involved with the launch of MPhil B had personal interests, for intellectual or 'public good' reasons, in seeing this postgraduate programme develop.

The resource dependency and neo-institutional theories of change are two complementary models which help to account for change. The resource dependency theory was described as a model which views change within organizations as a series of responses to the external environment, an environment which controls the key resources needed by the organization to survive. Resource dependency theory implies that it is a difference in the power held by the two actors, the organization and its environment, which prompts the organization to strategically interact with the environment. The responses made by the organization are both pro-active and reactive, and serve to manipulate the relationship between the organization and its environment in order to optimize the position of the organization. While the resource dependency theory views change more in terms of the issues connected to the unequal balance of power between the organization and its environment, the neo-institutionalist perspective on change views adaptation as being conditioned also by the value systems within the organization and how those value systems relate to the value systems of the broader institutional context. Change, through the neo-institutionalist perspective, is thus also the result of an accordance or convergence of values, rather than only an attempt to compete for resources. Obstacles to change might be the result of differing and incommensurate normative frameworks. Given that Case B was both exogenously and endogenously driven, we need to apply both theories to gain a clearer understanding for how and why this initiative proceeded and fared as it did.

Given the strength of the exogenous drivers, as indicated by the data, it is relatively simple to view MPhil B through the lens of resource dependency. Although the data indicated that those involved in MPhil B "had a passion around development" (Lecturer Five), the data clearly suggested that an important underlying motivation beneath this initiative was to join the "wave of programmatisation" as it was described by Lecturer Four. By joining this wave, the organization made an effort to

optimize its position in the environment, and optimized its ability to compete with other institutional units for the resources necessary for survival.

MPhil B, as indicated by the data, was not the only organization within the university responding to policy's call for change, and seeking to optimize its position within the environment by establishing itself as a programme involving several disciplines. The data indicated that "everybody in the whole university was frantically putting together programmes" (Lecturer Three) in an effort to ensure survival of departments and the individuals within those departments. This prompted defensive (and hence distorted) responses in many cases. One of the informants described how departments which were weaker in terms of student numbers attempted to optimize their positions to compete for funding by joining other stronger departments in interdisciplinary endeavors. These weaker departments would thus appear to be stronger due to their affiliation with programmes offered by larger and more robust departments. "So there was a lot of survival tactics going on, this shrewd kind of strategic maneuvering, and I think that detracted from the whole spirit of it" (Lecturer Three).

The competition for resources, however, was not the only impetus for this endeavor. As described earlier, the endogenous drivers of this initiative played a crucial role in the development of MPhil B. The data indicated that from the early 1990s there had been an interest on the part of several individuals from different disciplines in seeing the launch of a postgraduate programme concerning the issue of development. The data showed how this initiative was seen as "a contribution to a broader development initiative" within the South African context. These interests finally bore fruit after being triggered into action by the policy events of 1997.

The neo-institutionalist perspective on change views adaptation as also being conditioned by the value systems at work within an organization, and the way in which those value systems already at work coincide or collide with the value systems implied by the intended change. Change, through the neo-institutionalist perspective, is thus also the result of an accordance of values, rather than only an attempt to compete for resources. The data relates a history to this initiative that dates the initiative to well in advance of the policy events of 1997. The existence of this initiative long before the time of exogenous pressure for such an endeavor strongly indicates that the normative frameworks of those involved in the initiative concurred with the change proposed by the 1997 policy environment.

After the launch of MPhil B, the data indicated that there were organization and resourcing patterns which complicated the ability of academics to take part in the programme. This included the disapproval of colleagues for committing time to teaching on programmes which did not contribute to departmental income. The data also indicated that individuals received very little in terms of reward or professional recognition for their contribution to MPhil B. Despite these consequences, individuals have continued to contribute to the programme, which indicates a strong personal motivation for seeing postgraduate study pursued in this interdisciplinary area. The value systems at work within the programme, reflected in the normative commitments of the academics, have allowed it to survive to the point that it has, despite the complicated and seemingly dysfunctional resourcing structures and institutional environment.

10. Summary of Findings

In this research study, two postgraduate interdisciplinary programmes that appear to be socially responsive in nature were examined to better understand the challenges of implementation that such programmes face, in order to gain insight into the ways in which these obstacles may stem from the inherent difficulty of cross-disciplinary work, and to understand ways in which the institutional context works to support or inhibit such initiatives. For this study, data was collected from two interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes at one institution. Two units of analysis were chosen which were ostensibly similar in that they are both Masters in Philosophy interdisciplinary programmes that appeared to be socially responsive in nature. The logic underlying this selection was that it was more likely that patterns between the two would emerge. However, illuminating differences also emerged.

The transcripts from interviews were analyzed for ways in which they presented similar features; that is for ways in which MPhil A and MPhil B have experienced similar contextual and social challenges. The texts were also analyzed for areas of contrast; that is, for ways in which the data relating to the individual case studies showed differing contextual and social challenges.

The following sub-sections outline the most significant challenges which MPhil A and MPhil B have both faced, and the most noteworthy ways in which the challenges have not converged, as indicated by the data. It is acknowledged that the categories within the sub-sections are my own interpretation of the data.

10.1 Areas of Convergence

Shift to an integrated code

The data for both Case A and Case B indicated that the shift from a collection code to an integrated code had repercussions for the endeavors and their sustainability. For Case A, the data illustrated how the need to shift from the current structure of the programme to a more integrated, more “team-like” approach would have implications for the way that authority would be structured, and as a result weakening the autonomy of the individuals involved. Individual autonomy would need to be weakened to strengthen the coherency of the curriculum, its delivery, and assessment. It was suggested that this change to the way that people relate to each other could be a challenge to those involved in this programme as this change in approach would weaken the autonomy that is greatly valued by academics.

The change to an integrated code was also a challenge for those involved in Case B. For Case B in particular, the data revealed repercussions stemming from the weakening of boundaries and the change in the way that authority is structured. The more diffuse authority structure employed in this change context complicated the cooperative work being done in that there was an assertion of authority by one individual and there was no clearly defined person to deal with the problem. The change to an integrated code also prompted individuals from a certain discipline to feel threatened by the weakening of boundaries as they protected their discipline from encroachment from the fringes. Both of these issues may likely have had implications for the overall coherency of the programme, and the degree of integration which the programme was able to achieve.

Recognition of work

In both of the case studies, the data strongly indicated that one of the major obstacles that MPhil A and MPhil B have faced in establishing these interdisciplinary postgraduate offerings regards recognition of the work that the initiators, lecturers and conveners have carried out on a daily basis to initiate and to keep these programmes up and running. This surfaced mainly in terms of institutional recognition and promotion, and financial rewards.

For MPhil A, the institution was criticized for using a system of promotion which did not fully recognize forms of academic work alternative to publishing and mentoring PhD students. In the words of one informant, "...until recognition is given to people who are doing innovative curriculum development work, things won't change" (Lecturer One). The other lecturer involved in MPhil A discussed how the teachers involved also face difficulty in that teachers often do not get credit for teaching that is done outside their department.

During the data collection carried out for Case Study B, all three of the informants clearly and succinctly responded that the work which they have done on MPhil B has earned them very little to nothing in terms of rewards or recognition. The data also indicated that taking part in MPhil B was also considered to be detrimental to one's career path.

Institutional Funding and Support

Funding was a topic that surfaced readily in all of the interviews. For both Case A and Case B, all of the informants cited institutional funding and support (or lack thereof) as a major obstacle to implementing and maintaining the respective postgraduate programme.

Case A, which is ostensibly different from Case B in that it is funded from an outside source, faced considerable challenges in securing funding due to the university development office not granting their requests for funding. As a result, funding from a foreign source was eventually secured to cover the administrative and other costs for the first three years of the programme. The data indicated how MPhil A had experienced varying levels of institutional support, and how in terms of funding "We weren't a priority, we'd been up and down the priority list" (Lecturer One). In the early days of the project, MPhil A was given support by various levels of the university, which eventually faded. As described in the data, "...we felt more and more like we were becoming orphans. And the graduate school had been very happy to announce our birth, but as we grew the graduate school rather shirked its parental responsibilities" (Lecturer Two).

The data indicated that funding will continue to be an obstacle to the sustainability of MPhil A. When the external funding for MPhil A ceases in 2005, future financial support for the course by the university was considered to be very uncertain. This is due to the administrative position of the core course, which is now housed within a department rather than in the graduate school.

For Case B, two of the informants who were involved in the early phases of the initiative referred to a university administrator promising a considerable amount of

funding to help begin the initiative. This promise for funding was later retracted. The main effect of this was demoralization, according to one informant.

In the current phases of MPhil B, funding continues to be an obstacle. The current convener explained how there is no budget for MPhil B from which to pay for advertising the programme to the public, visiting lecturers or non-academic socializing.

The structure of the institution as obstacle

The data clearly indicated that the structure of the institution was deemed to be a challenge to the establishment and administration of interdisciplinary MPhil A and MPhil B.

For Case Study A, this surfaced in the data as the university's inability to administer interdisciplinary programmes. The data suggested that interdisciplinary programmes do not easily slot into the traditional disciplinary framework or current administrative structure of the university. The data also suggested that the broader politics surrounding the formation of the graduate school at this institution and the eventual "watering down" of that unit affected the intellectual and financial stability of MPhil A in future.

For Case Study B, the data strongly indicated that the way in which the university is structured was considered to be problematic to the endeavor of interdisciplinarity; that is, the way that the university is organized around discipline-based departments through which resources are allocated. The data also indicated that the structure of the department, and the way in which departments function as separate isolated units within the institution was also problematic. This surfaced in the data as informants discussed the difficulties that individuals face when teaching on a programme external to their home department. The data indicated that departments resisted their lecturers being borrowed, and in the case of one of the informants, did not recognize the work she was doing on MPhil B as part of fulfilling her departmental obligations.

Managerialist Practices

While analyzing the data for both case studies, the data indicated that the informants considered the value systems of the institution to be at least partially managerialist. This affected both of the programmes, albeit in slightly different manners. For MPhil A, the managerialist practices took shape in the administrative decisions which were taken from above and which were suggested by the data to be a threat to the intellectual integrity of the course and to place it in an administratively vulnerable position. For MPhil B, the institutional environment was described as one which was increasingly managerialist, and which was considered to be a factor shaping academics' ability or desire to take part in interdisciplinary endeavors, and in general demoralizing the university and leading to "plummeting levels of generosity" in terms of individual willingness to give time or effort.

10.2 Areas of Divergence

Institutional Climate

It is of interest to note that the data indicated that for one of the case studies, Case B, the institutional climate was considered to have had a significant and negative impact on the establishment of the postgraduate interdisciplinary programme. MPhil B was

established, in part, as a reaction to national policies (White Paper of 1997 and the Higher Education Act of 1997), which strongly encouraged the development of interdisciplinary programmes. It was also initiated during a time of institutional transformation when faculties were being reconstituted, which was represented by the informants as being “incredibly stressful” and a time in which a “culture of fear” existed. As one informant explained, “it was just a very bad time to try to innovate”.

Given the relatively short span of time between these two initiatives (three years), it is interesting to note that the institutional climate did not surface at all in the data connected to Case A. This is an important difference between the two cases because it serves to illustrate how the institutional climate may have rebounded or recovered within a few years from the various transformations occurring at this institution in the late 1990s, or it could also illustrate that people simply became more accustomed to the institutional climate. For MPhil A, it could also be deduced that relying on an outside donor has alleviated it from some of the pressures, at least for the time being, brought by the institutional context.

Social Organization

A very notable divergence between Case A and Case B was that the data collected for Case B indicated that there was a weakness in the social organization of the program at all levels. The data indicated that a lack of identification with a specific class or group was an issue for the convener and the postgraduate students that were enrolled in the programme. The data suggests that the social basis for solidarity amongst academics has been missing from this curriculum change, with probable ramifications for the degree of integration achieved by the curriculum and the programme’s ability to establish an interdisciplinary community of practice into which new members can be apprenticed and socialized. It was suggested that the lack of a coherent social organization for this postgraduate programme will very likely continue to create challenges for its long-term sustainability.

11. Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to analyze two interdisciplinary contexts within the same institution to better understand what obstacles these programmes face, to examine ways in which these may stem from the inherent difficulty of cross-disciplinary work, and to understand ways in which the institutional context works to support or inhibit such initiatives.

The data seems to indicate that both Case A and Case B experienced some difficulty as a result of the social and epistemological differences which often arise when individuals from varying disciplines are brought together. However, a good portion of the challenges which both programmes faced, as reflected by the data, seemed to be institutional in nature. Both programmes experienced some of the difficulties which typically arise from the change to an integrated code and the resulting weakening of boundaries, individual autonomy, and the hierarchical authority system. In addition, recognition of interdisciplinary work by the traditionally discipline-aligned university, lack of funding and support for interdisciplinarity, increasing managerialism, the administrative capacity of the institution, and the organizational structure of the university surfaced in the data as significant obstacles which both Case A and Case B experienced. Illuminating differences, however, did arise in that the data indicated that the institutional climate and a lack of community were considered to be significant obstacles for only one of the cases.

The data collected to inform this project seems to describe an institutional context where two programmes are introduced which respond to the national higher education transformation agenda and the call for interdisciplinarity. The environment into which these initiatives are introduced, however, is not necessarily conducive to their long-term stability. This study seems to serve as an example of Moore and Lewis' suggestion that "the process of achieving stable organizational forms to support the delivery of new curricular forms is considerably more complex than policy makers might have imagined (2002: p. 5). The complexity of the cases involved in this particular study doesn't derive exclusively from "issues of divergent pedagogic and epistemic orientations amongst academics" as described by Moore and Lewis, but from, among other things, the "inappropriate resourcing models" (ibid) that were identified in the data collected for these case studies.

In the process of completing his study of innovators and innovations in teaching and learning in UK higher education institutions, Silver (1999) identified that a major challenge to innovation in teaching and learning was that taking part in teaching and learning innovations seem to actually reduce an individual's prospects for promotion. Ramsden (1998), drawing on the work of Halsey (1992) and McInnis (1992), writes that in the modern higher educational climate, academics seem to be fairly satisfied with their work "while being increasingly dispirited, demoralised and alienated from their organizations" (p. 76); much of this stems from lack of recognition. Halsey's (1992) survey of lecturers in the UK revealed that about three-quarters believed that "promotion in academic life is too dependent on published work and too little on devotion to teaching". The sentiments expressed in the data collected for both cases seem to gel with this "international phenomenon of strong dissatisfaction with the rewards and recognition provided for good teaching in universities" (Ramsden, 1998: p. 78).

At a time when there are numerous change initiatives on the national transformation agenda which deal with teaching and learning, many of which seem to depend upon the willingness of academics to “donate” their time rather than be rewarded for it, the outlook for these initiatives being carried out to the quality and extent that they should be is less than optimal. Given the professional rewards (in terms of promotion and recognition) given to these particular interdisciplinary innovations in this institutional context, it seems to point to an environment in which innovation, rather than being encouraged, is systematically discouraged by the values of the traditional system, the administrative structure of the institution and the values and funding priorities of the institution.

The data indicated that interdisciplinary programmes may, however, be able to overcome the obstacles which appear to be before them. Student demand may be the factor which sustains these programmes, and even causes them to “persist and grow” as suggested by one informant. Programmes such as these are an “interdisciplinary door that is open to many people”, which gives such programmes a unique attraction in that “because it’s interdisciplinary, it affords them entry when they’ve done a degree in a specific discipline they want to branch out of” (Lecturer Four). In an economy which increasingly values diverse knowledges and lifelong learning skills, it may be this “open door” that allows these programmes to endure in spite of the obstacles which ostensibly work against them.

It is certain that more research needs to be carried out regarding the obstacles which postgraduate programmes face. Of particular interest would be research carried out within the same parameters, but concerning interdisciplinary programmes which are economically motivated and thus ostensibly different from the cases involved in the current study (which are ostensibly socially motivated). Also of great use would be research conducted at other tertiary institutions in South Africa.

It is hoped that this project has helped to give depth to a particular institutional context, and the values and practices which have impacted the formation and survival of postgraduate interdisciplinary programmes in this context. It is acknowledged that this study is limited, and that future studies which explore emerging themes more systematically would be of great use.

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